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THE MAID OF SKER

BY

R. D. BLACKMORE

AUTHOR OF

'LORNA DOONE,' 'CLARA VAUGHAN,' AND 'CRADOCK NOWELL'

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

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CHAPTER XLVIII.

A BREATHLESS DISINTERMENT.

By this time we were up to all the ins and outs of everything. A sailor has such a knowledge of knots, and the clever art of splicing, that you cannot play loose tricks, in trying on a yarn with him. Jerry Toms and I were ready, long before that day was out, to tie up our minds in a bow-line knot, and never more undo them. Jerry went even beyond my views, as was sure to be, because he knew so much less of the matter; he would have it that Parson Chowne had choked the two children without any aid, and then in hatred and mockery of the noble British uniform, had buried them deep in Braunton Burrows, wearing a cocked for a shovel hat, purely by way of outrage.

On the other hand, while I agreed with Jerry up to a certain distance, I knew more of Parson Chowne (whom he never had set eyes upon) than to listen to such rubbish. And while we agreed in the main so truly, and thoroughly praised each other's wisdom, all the people in the house made so highly much of us, that Jerry forgot the true line of reasoning, even before nine o'clock at night, and dissented from my conclusions so widely, and with so much arrogance, that it did not grieve me (after he got up) to have knocked him down like a ninepin.

However, in the morning he was all right, and being informed upon every side that the cook did it with the rolling-pin, he acknowledged the justice of it, having paid more attention to her than a married lady should admit, though parted from her husband. However, she forgave him nobly, and he did the same to her; and I, with all my knowledge of women, made avowal in the presence of the lady-housekeeper, that my only uneasiness was to be certain whether I ought to admire the more Jerry's behaviour or Mrs Cook's. And the cook had no certainty in the morning, exactly what she might have done.

This little matter made a stir far beyond its value; and having some knowledge of British nature, I pro-

posed to the comitatus, with deference both to the cook and housekeeper, also a glance at the first housemaid, that we should right all misunderstanding by dining together comfortably, an hour before the usual time. Because, as I clearly expressed it, yet most inoffensively, our breakfast had been ruined by a piece, I might say, of misconstruction overnight between two admirable persons. And Heaviside came in just then, and put the cap on all of it, by saying that true sailors were the greatest of all sportsmen; therefore, in honour of our arrival, he had asked, and got leave from the gamekeepers, to give a great rabbiting that afternoon down on Braunton Burrows; and he hoped that Mrs Cockhanterbury, being the lady-housekeeper, would grace the scene with her presence, and let every maid come to the utmost.

Heaviside's speech, though nothing in itself, neither displaying any manner at all, was received with the hottest applause; and for some time Jerry and I had to look at one another, without any woman to notice us. We made allowance for this, of course, although we did not like it. For, after all, who was Heaviside? But we felt so sorely the ill effects of the absence of perfect harmony upon the preceding evening (when all our male members of the human

race took more or less the marks of knuckles), that a sense of stiffness helped us to make no objection to anything. And tenfold thus, when we saw how the maids had made up their minds for frolicking.

These young things must have their way, as well as the nobler lot of us: for they really have not so very much less of mind than higher women have; and they feel what a woman is too well to push themselves so forward. They know their place, and they like their place, and they tempt us down into it.

Be that either way—and now unwomanly women waste their good brains upon a trifle of this kind—rabbiting was to be our sport; and no sooner was the dinner done, and ten minutes given to the maids to dress, than everydog on the premises worth his salt was whistled for. It would have amused you to see the maids, or I might say all the womankind, coming out with their best things on, and their hair done up, and all pretending never even to have seen a looking-glass.

Madame Heaviside (as she commanded all people to entitle her) was of the whole the very grandest as regards appearance. Also in manner and carrying on; but of this I have no time to speak. Enough that the former Naval Instructor thought it wiser to

keep his own place, and let her flirt with the game-keepers. We had dogs, and ferrets, and nets, and spades, and guns for those who were clever enough to keep from letting them off at all, and to frighten the women without any harm. There must have been five-and-twenty of us in number altogether, besides at least a score of children who ran down from Braunton village, when they saw what we were at. There was no restraint laid upon us by any presence of the gentry; for Sir Philip was not in the humour for sport, and the Squire of course kept himself to his room; and as for the Captain, we had no token of his return from South Devon yet.

Therefore we had the most wonderful fun, enjoying the wildness of the place, and the freshness of the river air, and wilfulness of the sandhills, also the hide-and-seek of the rushes, and the many ups and downs and pleasure of helping the young women in and out, also how these latter got (if they had any feet to be proud of) into rabbit-holes on purpose to be lifted out of them, and fill the rosettes of their shoes, and have them dusted by a naval man's very best pocket-handkerchief—together with a difficulty of standing on one foot while doing it, or having it done to them, and a fear of breathing too much out—after smothered rabbit at dinner-time—which made

their figures look beautiful. Enough that I took my choice among them, for consideration; and jotted down the names of three, who must have some cash from their petticoats. Let nobody for a moment dream that I started with this intention. The rest of my life was to be devoted to the Royal Navy, if only a hot war should come again; of which we already felt simmerings. But I could not regard all these things, after so many years at sea, without some desire for further acquaintance with the meaning of everything. At sea we forget a great deal of their ways. When we come ashore—there they are again!

This is a very childish thing for a man like me to think of. Nevertheless I do fall back from perfect propriety sometimes; never as regards money; but when my feelings are touched by the way in which superior young women try to catch me; or when my opinion is asked conscientiously as to cordials. And this same afternoon the noble clearness of the sun and air, and the sound of merry voices glancing where all the world (unless it were soft sand) would have echoed them, and the sense of going sporting—which is half the game of it—these and other things, as well as the fatness of the rabbits' backs, and great skill not to bruise them, led the whole of us, more or

less, into contemplation of Nature's beauties. We must have killed more than a hundred and fifty coneys, in one way and another, when Heaviside came up, almost at a run, to a hill where Jerry Toms and I were sitting down, to look about a bit, and to let the young women admire us.

"What's the matter?" said I, not liking to be interrupted thus.

"Matter enough," he panted out; "where is Madame? The Lord keep her away."

"Madame is gone down to the water-side," said Jerry, though I frowned at him, "together with that smart young fellow—I forget his name—underkeeper they call him."

"Hurrah, my hearties!" cried Heaviside; "that is luck, and no mistake. Now lend a hand, every lubber of you. Her pet dog Snap is in the sand; 'with the devil to pay, and no pitch hot,' if we take long to get him out again."

We knew what he meant; for several dogs of an over-zealous character had got into premature burial in the rabbit-galleries, through the stupidity of people who crowded upon the cone over them. Some had been dug out alive, and some dead, according to what their luck was. And now we were bound to dig out poor Snap, and woe to us all if we found him dead!

I took the biggest spade, as well as the entire command of all of us, and we started at quick step for the place which Heaviside pointed out to us. He told us, so far as his breath allowed, that his small brown terrier Snap had found a rabbit of tender age hiding in a tuft of rushes. Snap put all speed on at once, but young bunny had the heels of him, and flipped up her tail at the mouth of a hole, with an air of defiance which provoked Snap beyond all discretion. He scarcely stopped to think before he plunged with a yelp into the hole, while another and a wiser dog came up, and shook his ears at it. For a little while they heard poor Snap working away in great ecstasy, scratching at narrow turns, and yelping when he almost got hold of fur. Heaviside stood, in his heavy way, whistling into the entrance-hole, which went down from a steep ascent with a tuft of rushes over it. But Snap was a great deal too gamesome a dog to come back—even if he heard him. Meanwhile a lot of bulky fellows, who could do no more than clap their hands, got on the brow of the burrow and stamped, and shouted to Snap to dig deeper. Then of a sudden the whole hill slided, as a hollow fire does, and cast a great part of itself into a deep gully on the north of it. And those great louts who had sent it down so, found it very

hard (and never deserved) to get their clumsy legs out.

No wonder that Heaviside had made such a run to come and fetch us. For Snap must be now many feet underground, and the Naval Instructor knew what it would be to go home to Nanette without him. He stood above the slip and listened, and there was no bark of Snap; while to my mind came back strangely thoughts of the five poor sons of Sker, and of the little child dwelling in sand, forlorn and abandoned Bardie.

"Dig away, my lads, dig away!" I cried, from force of memory, and setting example to every one; "I have seen a thing like this before; it only wants quick digging." We dug and dug, and drove our pit through several decks of rabbit-berths; and still I cried "Dig on, my lads!" although they said it was hopeless. Then suddenly some one struck something hard, and cried "Halloa!" and frightened us. We crowded round, and I took the lead, and made the rest keep back from me, in right of superior discipline. And thence I heaved out a beautiful cocked-hat of a British Captain of the Royal Navy, with Snap inside of it, and not quite dead!

Such a cheer and sound arose (the moment that Snap give a little sniff), from universal excitement

and joy, with Heaviside at the head of it, that I feared to be hoisted quite out of the hole, and mounted on human shoulders. This I like well enough now and then, having many a time deserved without altogether ensuing it; but I could not stop to think of any private triumph now. The whole of my heart was hot inside me, through what I was thinking of.

That poor honest fellow, who so eschewed the adornment of the outward man, and carried out pure Christianity so as to take no heed of what he wore, or whether he wore anything whatever; yet who really felt for people of a weaker cultivation, to such an extreme that he hardly ever went about by day much,—this noble man had given evidence such as no man, who had lost respect by keeping a tailor, could doubt of. In itself, it was perspicuous; and so was the witness, before he put up with a sack, in order to tender it.

The whole force of this broke upon me now; while the others were showing the hat round, or blowing into the little dog's nostrils, and with a rabbit's tail tickling him; because in a single glance I had seen that the hat was our Captain Bampfylde's. And then I thought of old Sir Philip, striding sadly along these burrows, for ever seeking something.

"Dig away, dig away, my lads. Never mind the little dog. Let the maidens see to him. Under our feet there is something now, worth a hundred thousand dogs."

All the people stood and stared, and thought that I was off my wits; and but for my uniform, not one would ever have stopped to harken me. It was useless to speak to Heaviside. The whole of his mind was exhausted by anxiety as to his wife's little dog. No sleep could he see before him for at least three lunar months, unless little Snap came round again. So I had to rely on myself alone, and Jerry Toms, and two gamekeepers.

All these were for giving up; because I can tell you it is no joke to throw out spadeful after spadeful of this heavy deceitful sand, with half of it coming back into the hole; and the place where you stand not steadfast. And the rushes were combing darkly over us, showing their ginger-coloured roots, and with tufts of jagged eyebrows threatening overwhelment. For our lives we worked away—with me (as seems to be my fate) compelled to be the master—and all the people looking down, and ready to revile us, if we could not find a stirring thing. But we did find a stirring thing, exactly as I will tell you.

For suddenly my spade struck something soft, something which returned no sound, and yet was firm enough to stop, or at any rate to clog the tool. Although it was scarcely twilight yet, and many people stood around us, a feeling not of fear so much as horror seized upon me. Because this was not like the case of digging out poor bodies smothered by accident or the will of God, but was something far more dreadful; proof, to wit, of atrocious murder done by villany of mankind upon two little helpless babes. So that I scarce could hold the spade, when a piece of white linen appeared through the sand, and then some tresses of long fair hair, and then two little hands crossed on the breast, and a set of small toes sticking upward. And close at hand lay another young body, of about the same size, or a trifle larger.

At this terrible sight, the deepest breath of awe drew through all of us, and several of the women upon the hill shrieked and dropped, and the children fled, and the men feared to come any nearer. Even my three or four fellow-diggers leaped from the hole with alacrity, leaving me all by myself to go on with this piteous disinterment. For a moment I trembled too much to do so, and leaned on my spade in the dusky grave, watching the poor little things, and loath to break with sacrilegious hands such innocent

and eternal rest. "Ye pure and stainless souls," I cried, "hovering even now above us, in your guardian angel's arms, and appealing for judgment on your icy-hearted murderer, pardon me for thus invading, in the sacred cause of justice, the calm sleep of your tenements."

In this sad and solemn moment, with all the best spectators moved to tears by my deep eloquence, as well as their own rich sympathies, it struck me that the legs of one of the corpses stuck up rather strangely. I had not been taken aback, at all, by the bright preservation of hands and toes, because I knew well what the power of sand is when the air is kept far away; but it was dead against all my experience, that even a baby, eight years buried, should have that muscular power of leg. Without any further hesitation, up I caught the nearest of them, being desperate now to know what would be the end of it.

Three or four women, whose age had passed from lying in to laying out, now ran down the hill in great zealousness; but though their profession is perhaps the most needful of all yet invented by human nature, there was no exercise for it now. For behold, in the evening light, and on the brink of the grave, were laid two very handsome and large Dutch dolls,

clad in their night-gowns, and looking as fresh as when they left the doll-maker's shop. The sand remained in their hair of course, and in their linen, but fell away (by reason of its dryness) from their faces, and hands, and feet, the whole of which were of fine hard wax. But the joints of their arms and legs had stiffened, from having no children to work them, also their noses had been spoiled at some stage of their obsequies; and upon the whole it seemed hard to say whether their appearance was more ludicrous or deplorable.

However, that matter was settled for them by the universal guffaw of the fellows who had been scared of their scanty wits not more than two minutes since, but all of whom now were as brave as lions to make laughter at my expense. This is a thing which I never allow, but very soon put a stop to it. And so I did now, without any hard words, but turning their thoughts discreetly.

"Come, my lads," I said, "we have done a better turn to the gentleman who feeds us, than if we had found two thousand babies, such as you ran away from. Rally round me, if you have a spark of courage in your loutish bodies. You little know how much hangs on this; while in your clumsy witless way, you are making a stupid joke of it.

Mr Heaviside, I pray you, seek for me Mistress Cockhanterbury; while I knock down any rogue who shows the impudence to come near me."

Every man pulled his proud stomach in, when I spoke of the lady-housekeeper, who was a Tartar, high up on a shelf, allowing no margin for argument. She appeared in the distance, as managing-women always do when called upon; and she saw the good sense of what little I said, and she laid them all under my orders.

CHAPTER XLIX.

ONE WHO HAS INTERRED HIMSELF.

SUCH an effect was now produced all over all around us, that every man pressed for his neighbour's opinion, rather than offer his own, almost. This is a state of the public mind that cannot be long put up with; for half the pleasure goes out of life when a man is stinted of argument. But inasmuch as I was always ready for all comers, and would not for a moment harken any other opinion, the great bulk of conclusion ran into the grooves I laid for it.

This was neither more nor less than that Satan's own chaplain, Chowne, was at the helm of the whole of it. Some people said that I formed this opinion through an unchristian recollection of his former rudeness to me; I mean when he blew me out of bed, and tried to drown, and to burn me alive. However, the great majority saw that my nature was not of this sort, but rather inclined to reflect with

pleasure upon any spirited conduct. And to tell the whole truth, upon looking back at the Parson, I admired him more than any other man I had seen, except Captain Nelson. For it is so rare to meet with a man who knows his own mind thoroughly, that if you find him add thereto a knowledge of his neighbours' minds, certain you may be that here is one entitled to lead the nation. He may be almost too great to care about putting this power in exercise, unless any grand occasion betides him; just as Parson Chowne refused to go into the bishopric; and just as Nelson was vexed at being the supervisor of smugglers. Nevertheless these men are ready, when God sees fit to appoint them.

However, to come back to these dolls, and the opening now before them. The public (although at first disappointed not to have found two real babies strangled in an experienced manner) perceived the expediency of rejoicing in the absence of any such horror. Only there were many people, of the lower order, so disgusted at this cheat, and strain upon their glands of weeping, with no blood to show for it, that they declared their firm resolve to have nothing more to do with it.

For my part, being some little aware of the way in which laurels are stolen, I kept my spade well

up, and the two dolls in my arms, with their heads down, and even their feet grudged to the view of the gossipers. In the midst of an excited mob, a calm sight of the right thing to do may lead them almost anywhere. And I saw that the only proper thing was to leave everything to me. They (with that sense of fairness which exists in slow minds more than in quick ones) fell behind me, because all knew that the entire discovery was my own. Of course without Snap I could never have done it; nor yet without further accidents: still there it was; and no man even of our diffident Welsh nation, can in any fairness be expected to obscure himself.

My tendency, throughout this story, always has been to do this. But I really did begin to feel the need of abjuring this national fault, since men of a mixture of any sort, without even Celtic blood in them, over and over again had tried to make a mere nobody of me.

Hence it was, and not from any desire to advance myself, that among the inferior race, I stood upon my rights, and stuck to them. If ever there had been any drop of desire for money left in me, after perpetual purification (from seven years of getting only coppers, and finding most of them forgeries), this scene was alone sufficient to make me glad of an

empty purse. For any man who has any money must long to put more to it; as the children pile their farthings, hoping how high they may go. I like to see both old and young full of schemes so noble; only they must let an ancient fellow like me keep out of them.

These superior senses glowed within me, and would not be set aside by any other rogue preceding me, when I knocked at Sir Philip's door, and claimed first right of audience. The other fellows were all put away by the serving-men, as behoved them; then I carried in everything, just as it was, and presented the whole with the utmost deference.

Sir Philip had inkling of something important, and was beginning to shake now and then; nevertheless he acknowledged my entrance with his wonted dignity; signed to the footman to refresh the sperm-oil lamps in the long dark room; and then to me to come and spread my burden on a table. Nothing could more clearly show the self-command which a good man wins by wrestling long with adversity. For rumour had reached him that I had dug up his son's cocked-hat, and his two grandchildren, all as fresh as the day itself. It is not for me (who have never been so deeply stirred in the grain of the heart by heaven's visitations) to go through and make a show

of this most noble and ancient gentleman's doings, or feelings, or language even. A man of low station, like myself, would be loth to have this done to him, at many and many a time of his life; so (if I could even do it in the case of a man so far above me, and so far more deeply harrowed) instead of being proud of describing, I must only despise myself.

Enough to say that this snowy-haired, most simple yet stately gentleman, mixed the usual mixture of the things that weep and the things that laugh; which are the joint-stock of our nature, from the old Adam and the young one. What I mean—if I keep to facts—is that he knelt on a strip of canvas laid at the end of the table, and after some trouble to place his elbows (because of the grit of the sandiness), bowed his white forehead and silvery hair, and the calm majesty of his face, over those two dollies, and over his son's very best cocked-hat, and in silence wept thanksgiving to the great Father of everything.

"David Llewellyn," he said, as he rose and approached me as if I were quite his equal; "allow me to take your hand, my friend. There are few men to whom I would sooner owe this great debt of gratitude than yourself, because you have sailed with my son so long. To you and your patience and sagacity, under the mercy of God, I owe the proof, or at any

rate these tokens of my poor son's innocence. I—I thank the Lord and you——"

Here the General for the moment could not say another word.

"It is true, your Worship," I answered, "that none of your own people showed the sense or the courage to go on. But it is a Welshman's honest pride to surpass all other races in valour and ability. I am no more than the very humblest of my ancesters may have been."

"Then all of them must have been very fine fellows," Sir Philip replied, with a twinkling glance. "But now I will beg of you one more favour. Carry all these things, just as they are, to the room of my son, Mr Philip Bampfylde."

At first I was so taken aback that I could only gaze at him. And then I began to think, and to see the reason of his asking it.

"I have asked you to do a strange thing, good David; if it is an unpleasant one, say so in your blunt sailor's fashion."

"Your honour," I answered, with all the delicacy of my nature upwards; "say not another word. I will do it."

For truly to speak it, if anything had been often a grief and a care to me, it was the bitterness of thinking

of that Squire Philip deeply, and not knowing anything. The General bowed to me with a kindness none could take advantage of, and signalled me to collect my burden. Then he appointed me how to go, together with a very old and long-accustomed servitor. Himself would not come near his son, for fear of triumph over him.

After a long bit of tapping, and whispering, and the mystery servants always love to make of the simplest orders, I was shown with my arms well aching (for those wooden dolls were no joke, and the Captain's hat weighed a stone at least, with all the sand in the lining) into a dark room softly strewn, and hung with ancient damask. The light of the evening was shut out, and the failure of the candles made it seem a cloudy starlight. Only in the furthest corner there was light enough to see by; and there sate, at a very old desk, a white-haired man with his hat on.

If I can say one thing truly (while I am striving at every line to tell the downright honesty), this truth is that my bones and fibres now grew cold inside of me. There was about this man, so placed, and with the dimness round him, such an air of difference from whatever we can reason with, and of far withdrawal from the ways of human nature, as must send

a dismal shudder through a genial soul like mine. There he sate, and there he spent three parts of his time with his hat on, gazing at some old grey tokens of a happy period, but (so far as could be judged) hoping, fearing, doing, thinking, even dreaming—nothing! He would not allow any clock or watch, or other record of time in the chamber, he would not read or be read to, neither write or receive a letter.

There he sate, with one hand on his forehead pushing back the old dusty hat, with his white hair straggling under it and even below the gaunt shoulder-blades, his face set a little on one side, without any kind of meaning in it, unless it were long weariness, and patient waiting God's time of death.

I was told that once a-day, whenever the sun was going down over the bar, in winter or summer, in wet or dry, this unfortunate man arose, as if he knew the time by instinct without view of heaven, and drew the velvet curtain back and flung the shutter open, and for a moment stood and gazed with sorrow-worn yet tearless eyes upon the solemn hills and woods, and down the gliding of the river, following the pensive footfall of another receding day. Then with a deep sigh he retired from all chance of starlight, darkening body, mind, and soul, until another sunset.

Upon the better side of my heart, I could feel true pity for a man overwhelmed like this by fortune; while my strength of mind was vexed to see him carry on so. Therefore straight I marched up to him, when I began to recover myself, having found no better way of getting through perplexity.

As my footsteps sounded heavily in the gloomy chamber, Squire Philip turned, and gazed at first with cold displeasure, and then with strong amazement at me. I waited for him to begin, but he could not, whether from surprise or loss of readiness through such long immurement.

"May it please your Honour," I said; "the General has sent me hither to clear my Captain from the charge of burying your Honour's children."

"What—what do you mean?" was all that he could stammer forth, while his glassy eyes were roving from my face to the dolls I bore, and round the room, and then back again.

"Exactly as I say, your Honour. These are what the wild man took for your two children in Braunton Burrows; and here is the Captain's cocked-hat, which some one stole, to counterfeit him. The whole thing was a vile artifice, a delusion, cheat, and mockery."

I need not repeat how I set this before him, but

only his mode of receiving it. At first he seemed wholly confused and stunned, pressing his head with both hands, and looking as if he knew not where he was. Then he began to enter slowly into what I was telling him, but without the power to see its bearing, or judge how to take it. He examined the dolls, and patted them, and added them to a whole school which he kept, with two candles burning before them. And then he said, "They have long been missing: I am pleased to recover them."

Then for a long time he sate in silence, and in his former attitude, quite as if his mind relapsed into its old condition: and verily I began to think that the only result of my discovery, so far as concerned poor Squire Philip, would be a small addition to his gallery of dolls. However, after a while he turned round, and cried with a piercing gaze at me—

"Mariner, whoever you are, I do not believe one word of your tale. The hat is as new and the dolls are as fresh as if they were buried yesterday. And I take that to be the truth of it. How many years have I been here? I know not. Bring me a looking-glass."

He pointed to a small mirror which stood among his precious relics. Being mounted with silver and tortoise-shell, this had been (as they told me after-

wards) the favourite toy of his handsome wife. When I handed him this, he took off his hat, and shook his white hair back, and gazed earnestly, but without any sorrow, at his mournful image.

"Twenty years at least," he pronounced it, in a clear decided voice; "twenty years it must have taken to have made me what I am. Would twenty years in a dripping sand hill leave a smart gentleman's laced hat and a poor little baby's dolls as fresh and bright as the day they were buried? Old mariner, I am sorry that you should lend youself to such devices. But perhaps you thought it right."

This, although so much perverted, made me think of his father's goodness and kind faith in every one. And I saw that here was no place now for any sort of argument.

"Your Honour is altogether wrong," I answered, very gently: "the matter could have been, at the utmost, scarcely more than eight years ago, according to what they tell me. And if you can suppose that a man of my rank and age and service would lend himself to mean devices, there are at least thirty of your retainers, and of honest neighbours, who have seen the whole thing and can swear to its straightforwardness. And your Honour, of course, knows everything a thousand times better than I do; but of

sand, and how it keeps things everlasting (so long as dry), your Honour seems, if I may say it, to have no experience."

He did not take the trouble to answer, but fell back into his old way of sitting, as if there was nothing worth argument.

People say that every man is like his father in many ways; but the first resemblance that I perceived between Sir Philip and his elder son was, that the squire arose and bowed with courtesy as I departed.

Upon the whole, this undertaking proved a disappointment to me. And it mattered a hundredfold as much that our noble General was not only vexed, but angered more than one could hope of him. Having been treated a little amiss, I trusted that Sir Philip would contribute to my self-respect by also feeling angry. Still I did not desire more than just enough to support me, or at the utmost to overlap me, and give me the sense of acting aright by virtue of appeasing him. But on the present occasion he showed so large and cloudy a shape of anger, wholly withdrawn from my sight (as happens with the Peak of Teneriffe)—also he so clearly longed to be left alone, and meditate, that I had no chance to offer him more than three opinions. All these were of genuine value at the time of offering; and must

have continued so to be, if the facts had not belied them. Allowing for this adverse view, I will not even state them.

Nevertheless I had the warmest invitation to abide, and be welcome to the best that turned upon any of all the four great spits, or simmered and lifted the pot-lids suddenly for a puff of fine smell to come out in advance. To a man of less patriotic feeling this might thus have commended itself. But to my mind there was nothing visible in these hills and valleys, and their sloping towards the sea, which could make a true Welshman doubt the priority of Welshland. For with us the sun is better, and the air moves less in creases, and the sea has more of rapid gaiety in breaking. The others may have higher cliffs, or deeper valleys down them, also (if they like to think so) darker woods for robbers' nests —but our own land has a sweetness, and a gentle liking for us, and a motherly pleasure in its bosom when we do come home to it, such as no other land may claim—according to my experience.

These were my sentiments as I climbed, upon the ensuing Sunday, a lofty hill near the Ilfracombe road, commanding a view of the Bristol Channel and the Welsh coast beyond it. The day was so clear that I could follow the stretches and curves of my native

shore, from the low lands of Gower away in the west through the sandy ridges of Aberavon and the grey rocks of Sker and Porthcawl, as far as the eastern cliffs of Dunraven and the fading bend of St Donat's.

The sea between us looked so calm, and softly touched with shaded lights and gentle variations, also in unruffled beauty so fostering and benevolent, that the white-sailed coasters seemed to be babies fast asleep on their mother's lap.

"How long is this mere river to keep me from my people at home?" I cried: "it looks as if one could jump it almost! A child in a cockle-shell could cross it."

At these words of my own, a sudden thought, which had never occurred before, struck me so that my brain seemed to buzz.

But presently reason came to my aid; and I said, "No, no; it is out of the question; without even a thread of sail! I must not let these clods laugh at me for such a wild idea. And the name in the stern of the boat as well, downright 'Santa Lucia!' Chowne must have drowned those two poor children, and then rehearsed this farce of a burial with the Captain's hat on, to enable his man to swear truly to it. Tush, I am not in my dotage yet. I can see the force of everything."

CHAPTER L.

A BRAVE MAN RUNS AWAY.

It may be the power of honesty, or it may be strength of character coupled with a more than usual brightness of sagacity—but whatever the cause may be, the result seems always to be the same, in spite of inborn humility—to wit, that poor old Davy Llewellyn, wherever his ups and downs may throw him, always has to take the lead! This necessity, as usual, seemed to be arising now at Narnton Court—the very last place in the world where one could have desired it. Since the present grand war began (with the finest promise of lasting, because nobody knows any cause for it, so that it must be a law of nature), I have not found much occasion to dwell upon common inland incidents. These are in nature so far below all maritime proceedings, that a sailor is tempted to forget such trifles as people are doing ashore.

Even upon Holy Scripture (since the stirring times

began for me henceforth to chronicle), it has not been my good-luck to be able to sit and think of anything. Nevertheless I am almost sure that it must have been an active man of the name of Nehemiah, who drew for his rations every day, one fat ox, and six choice sheep, and fowls of order various.

All of these might I have claimed, if my capacity had been equal to this great occasion. Hence it may be well supposed that the kitchen was my favourite place, whenever I deigned to enter into converse with the servants. At first the head-cook was a little shy ; but I put her soon at her ease by describing (from my vast breadth of experience) the proper manner to truss and roast a man—and still better, a woman. The knowledge I displayed upon a thing so far above her level, coupled with my tales of what we sailors did in consequence, led this excellent creature so to appreciate my character, and thirst for more of my narratives, that I never could come amiss, even at dishing-up time.

But here I fell into a snare, as every seaman is sure to do when he relaxes his mind too much in the charms of female society. Not concerning the cook herself—for I gave her to understand at the outset that I was not a marrying man, and she (possessing

a husband somewhere) resolved not to hanker after me—but by means of a fair young maid, newly apprenticed to our head-cook, although of a loftier origin.

More than once, while telling my stories, I had obtained a little glimpse of long bright ringlets flashing and of shy young eyes just peeping through the hatch of the scullery-door, where the huckaback towel hung down from the roller. And then, on detection, there used to ensue a very quick fumbling of small red hands, as if being dried with a desperate haste in the old jack-towel; and then a short sigh, and light feet retiring.

When this had happened for three or four times, I gave my head-cook a sudden wink, and sprang through the scullery-door and caught the little red hands in the fold of the towel, and brought forth the owner, in spite of deep blushes, and even a little scream or two. Then I placed her in a chair behind the jack-chains, and continued my harrowing description of the way I was larded for roasting once; by a score of unclothed Gabooners. Also how the skewers of bar-wood thrust in to make me of a good rich colour, when I should come to table, had not that tenacity which our English wood is gifted with; so that I was enabled to shake (after praying to God for

assistance) my right arm out, and then my left ; and after clapping both together (to restore circulation), it came providentially into my head to lay hold of the spit and charge them. And then ensued such a scene as I could not even think of laying before young and delicate females.

This young girl, whose name was "Polly," always (at this pitch of terror) not only shivered but shuddered so, and needed support for her figure beyond the power of stays to communicate, also let such tears begin to betray themselves and then retreat, and then come out and defy the world, with a brave sob at their back almost,—that I do not exaggerate in saying how many times I had the pleasure of roasting myself for the sake of them.

However, it always does turn out that pleasures of this sort are transient ; and I could not have been going on with Polly more than ten days at the utmost, when I found myself in a rare scrape, to be sure. And this was the worse, because Sir Philip so strongly desired my presence now, perhaps in the vain hope of my convincing that obstinate Squire of his brother's innocence, when that brother should return.

Now I need not have spoken as yet of Miss Polly if she had been but a common servant, because in

that case her peace of mind would have been of no consequence to the household. But, as it happened, she was a person of no small importance, by reason of the very lofty nature of her connections: for she was no less than genuine niece to the lady-housekeeper Mrs Cockhanterbury herself. And hence she became the innocent cause of my departure from Narnton Court, before I had time to begin my inquiries about the two poor little children.

This I had made up my mind to do, as soon as that strange idea had crossed it, while I was gazing upon the sea; and my meaning was to go through all the traces that might still be found of them, and the mode of their disappearance. It is true that this resolve was weakened by a tempest which arose that very same evening after the Channel had looked so insignificant, and which might have been expected after that appearance. Nevertheless I must have proceeded according to my intention, if my heart had not been too much for me in the matter of Polly Cockhanterbury.

Being just now in my sixtieth year, I could not prove such a coxcomb, of course, as to imagine that a pretty girl of two-and-twenty could care for me, so that no course remained open to me as an honourable man and gallant British officer, who studies his

own peace of mind, except to withdraw from this too tempting neighbourhood.

And in this resolution I was confirmed by Mrs Cockhanterbury's reluctance to declare in a binding manner her intentions towards her niece. Also by finding that somehow or other the whole of the ground-floor at Narnton Court had taken it into their heads to regard me as a man of desirable substance. It is possible that in larger moments, when other people were boasting, I may have insisted a little too much upon my position as landowner in the parish of Newton Nottage. Also I may have described too warmly my patronage of the schoolmaster, and investment of cash with a view to encourage the literature of the parish. But I never could have said —what all of them deposed to—such a very strong untruth, as to convey the conclusion (even to a Devonshire state of mind), that Colonel Lougher and I divided the whole of the parish between us!

Be that as it may, there was not any maid over thirty who failed to set her cap at me, and my silver hair was quite restored to a youthful tinge of gold. Hence I was horrified at the thought that Polly might even consent to have me for the sake of my property, and upon discovering its poetical existence,

lead me a perfectly wretched life, as bad as that of poor Heaviside.

So that, in spite of all attractions, and really serious business, and the important duty of awaiting the Captain's return from Pomeroy Castle, and even in spite of Jerry Toms' offer to take Polly off my hands —as if she would say a word to him !—and all the adjurations of poor Heaviside, who had defied his wife (all the time I was there to back him up), and now must have to pay out for it—what did I do but agree to doff my uniform, and work my passage on board the Majestic, a fore-and-aft-rigged limestone boat of forty-eight tons and a half? Of course she was bound on the usual business of stealing the good Colonel Lougher's rocks, but I distinctly stipulated to have nothing to do with that.

My popularity now was such, with all ranks of society, also I found myself pledged for so many stories that same evening, that I imparted to none except Sir Philip, and Polly, and Jerry Toms, and Heaviside, and one or two more, the scheme of my sudden departure. My mind was on the point of changing when I beheld sweet Polly's tears, until I felt that I must behave, at my time of life, as her father would; because she had no father.

When I brought the Majestic into shallow water

off the Tuskar, every inch of which I knew, it was no small comfort to me that I could not see the shore. For years I had longed to see that shore, and dreamed of it perpetually, while tossing ten thousand miles away; and now I was glad to have it covered with the twilight fogginess. It suited me better to land at night, only because my landing would not be such as I was entitled to. And every one knows how the Navy and Army drop in public estimation, when the wars seem to be done with. Therefore I expected little; and I give you my word that I got still less.

It may have been over eleven o'clock, but at any rate nothing to call very late, just at the crest of the summer-time, when I gave three good strong raps at the door of my own cottage, knowing exactly where the knots were. I had not met a single soul to know me, or to speak my name, although the moon was a quarter old, and I found a broken spar, and bore it as I used to bear my fishing-pole.

No man who has not been long a-roving can understand all the fluttering ways of a man's heart when he comes home again. How he looks at every one of all the old houses he knows so well; at first as if he feared it for having another piece built on, or

grander people inside of it. And then upon finding this fear vain, he is almost ready to beg its pardon for not having looked at it such a long time. It is not in him to say a word to, or even about, the children coming out thus to stare at him. All the children he used to know are gone to day's work long ago ; and the new ones would scarcely trust him so as to suck a foreign lollipop. He knows them by their mothers ; but he cannot use their names to them.

There is nothing solid dwelling for a poor man long away, except the big trees that lay hold upon the ground in earnest, and the tomb-stones keeping up his right to the parish churchyard. Along the wall of this I glanced, with joy to keep outside of it ; while I struck, for the third time strongly, at not being let into mine own house.

At last a weak and faltering step sounded in my little room, and then a voice came through the latch-hole, "Man of noise, how dare you thus ? you will wake up our young lady."

"Master Roger, let me in. Know you not your own landlord ?"

The learned schoolmaster was so astonished that he could scarcely draw back the bolt. "Is it so ? Is it so indeed ? I thank the Lord for sending thee,"

was all he could say, while he stood there shaking both my hands to the very utmost that his slender palms could compass.

"Friend Llewellyn," he whispered at last, "I beg thy pardon heartily, for having been so rude to thee. But it is such a business to hush the young lady; and if she once wakes she talks all the night long. I fear that her mind is almost too active for a maid of her tender years."

"What young lady do you mean?" I asked; "is Bunny become a young lady now?"

"Bunny!" he cried, with no small contempt; then perceiving how rude this was to me, began casting about for apologies.

"Never mind that," I said; "only tell me who this wonderful young lady is."

"Miss Andalusia, the 'Maid of Sker,' as every one now begins to call her. There is no other young lady in the neighbourhood to my knowledge."

"Nor in the whole world for you, I should say, by the look of your eyes, Master Roger Berkrolles. Nevertheless put your coat on, my friend, and give your old landlord a bit to eat. I trow that the whole of my house does not belong even to Miss Delushy. Have I not even a granddaughter?"

"To be sure, and a very fine damsel she is, ay, and a good and comely one; though she hath no turn for erudition. What we should do without Bunny, I know not. She is a most rare young housewife."

The tears sprang into my eyes at this, as I thought of her poor grandmother, and I gave Master Berkrolles' hand a squeeze which brought some into his as well.

"Let me see her," was all I said; "it is not easy to break her rest, unless she is greatly altered."

"She is not in bed; she is singing her young friend to sleep. I will call her presently."

This was rather more, however, than even my patience could endure: so I went quietly up the stairs, and pushing the door of the best room gently, there I heard a pretty voice, and saw a very pretty sight. In a little bed which seemed almost to shine with cleanliness, there lay a young girl fast aleep, but lying in such a way that none who had ever seen could doubt of her. That is to say, with one knee up, and the foot of the other leg thrown back, and showing through the bed-clothes, as if she were running a race in sleep. And yet with the back laid flat, and sinking into the pillow deeply; while a pair of little restless arms came out and strayed on the coverlet. Her full and lively red lips were parted, as

if she wanted to have a snore, also her little nose well up, and the rounding of the tender cheeks untrimmed to the maiden oval. Down upon these dark lashes hung, fluttering with the pulse of sleep; while heavy clusters of curly hair, dishevelled upon the pillow, framed the gentle curve of the forehead and smiling daintiness of the whole.

Near this delicate creature sate, in a bending attitude of protection, a strong and well-made girl, with black hair, jet-black eyes, and a rosy colour spread upon a round plump face. She was smiling as she watched the effect of an old Welsh air which she had been singing—"Ar hyd y nos." To look at her size and figure, you would say that her age was fourteen at least; but I knew that she was but twelve years old, as she happened to be our Bunny.

You may suppose that this child was amazed to see her old Granny again once more, and hardly able to recognise him, except by his voice, and eyes, and manner, and a sort of way about him such as only relations have. For really, if I must tell the truth, the great roundness of the world had taken such a strong effect upon me, that I had not been able to manage one straight line towards Newton Nottage for something over six years now. Perhaps I have said that the Admiralty did not encourage our correspondence;

and most of us were very well content to allow our dear friends to think of us. So that by my pay alone could my native parish argue whether I were alive or dead.

It would not become me to enter into the public rejoicing upon the morrow, after my well-accustomed face was proved to be genuine at the "Jolly." There are moments that pass our very clearest perception, and judgment, and even our strength to go through them again. And it was too early yet—except for a man from low latitudes—to call for rum-and-water. The whole of this I let them know, while capable of receiving it.

CHAPTER LI.

TRIPLE EDUCATION.

Master Roger Berkrolles had proved himself a schoolmaster of the very driest honesty. This expression, upon afterthought, I beg to use expressly. My own honesty is of a truly unusual and choice character; and I have not found, say a dozen men, fit anyhow to approach it. But there is always a sense of humour, and a view of honour, wagging in among my principles to such an extent that they never get dry, as the multiplication-table does. Master Berkrolles was a man of too much mind for joking.

Therefore, upon the very first morning after my return, and even before our breakfast-time, he poured me out such a lot of coin as I never did hope to see, himself regarding them as no more than so many shells of the sea to count. All these he had saved from my pay in a manner wholly beyond my imagina-

tion, because, though I love to make money of people, I soon let them make it of me again. And this was my instinct now; but Roger laid his thin hand on the heap most gravely, and through his spectacles watched me softly, so that I could not be wroth with him.

"Friend Llewellyn, I crave your pardon. All this money is lawfully yours; neither have I, or anybody, the right to meddle with it. But I beg you to consider what occasions may arise for some of these coins hereafter. Also, if it should please the Lord to call me away while you are at sea, what might become of the dear child Bunny, without this mammon to procure her friends? Would you have her, like poor Andalusia, dependent upon charity?"

"Hush!" I whispered; too late, however, for there stood Bardie herself, a slim, light-footed, and graceful child, about ten years old just then, I think. Her dress of slate-coloured stuff was the very plainest of the plain, and made by hands more familiar with the needle than the scissors. No ornament, or even change of colour, was she decked with, not so much as a white crimped frill for the fringes of hair to dance upon. No child that came to the well (so long as she possessed a mother) ever happened to be dressed in this denying manner. But two girls blessed with good stepmothers, having children of their own, were

indued, as was known already, with dresses cut from the self-same remnant. Now, as she looked at Roger Berkrolles with a steadfast wonder, not appearing for the moment to remember me at all, a deep spring of indefinite sadness filled her dark grey eyes with tears.

"Charity!" she said at last: "if you please, sir, what is charity?"

"Charity, my dear, is kindness; the natural kindness of good people."

"Is it what begins at home, sir; as they say in the copy-books?"

"Yes, my dear; but it never stops there. It is a most beautiful thing. It does good to everybody. You heard me say, my dear child, that you are dependent on charity. It is through no fault of your own, remember; but by the will of God. You need not be ashamed to depend on the kindness of good people."

Her eyes shone, for a moment, with bright gratitude towards him for reconciling her with her pride; and then being shy at my presence perhaps, she turned away, just as she used to do, and said to herself very softly—"I would rather have a home though—I would rather have a home, and a father and mother of my own, instead of beautiful charity."

Master Berkrolles told me, when she was gone,

that many children of the place had no better manners than to be always shouting after her, when coming back from the sandhills, "Where's your father? Where's your mother? Where's your home, Delushy?"

This, of course, was grievous to her, and should never have been done; and I let Roger know that his business was to stop any scandal of this kind. But he declared that really the whole of his mind was taken up, and much of his body also, in maintaining rule and reason through the proper hours. After school-time it was not the place of the schoolmaster, but of the parson of the parish, or by deputy churchwardens, or failing them the clerk, and (if he were out of the way) the sexton, to impress a certain tone of duty on the young ones. Especially the sexton need not even call his wife to help, if he would but have the wit to cultivate more young thoughtfulness, by digging a grave every other day, and trusting the Lord for orders.

It was not long before Delushy learned some memory of me, partly with the aid of Bunny, partly through the ship I made—such as no other man could turn out—partly through my uniform, and the rest of it by means of goodness only can tell what. A man who is knocked about, all over rounds, and

flats, and sides of mountains, also kicked into and out of every hole and corner, and the strong and weak places of the earth, and upset after all the most by his fellow-creatures' doings, although he may have started with more principle than was good for him, comes home, in the end, to look at results far more than causes.

This was exactly mine own case. I can hardly state it more clearly. I wanted no praise from anybody; because I felt it due to me. A fellow who doubts about himself may value approbation; and such was the case with me, perhaps, while misunderstood by the magistrates. But now all the money which I had saved, under stewardship of Berkrolles, enabled all my household to stand up and challenge calumny.

There is a depth of tender feeling in the hearts of Welshmen, such as cannot anywhere else be discovered by a Welshman. Heartily we love to find man or woman of our own kin (even at the utmost nip of the calipers of pedigree) doing anything which reflects a spark of glory on us. Of this man, or woman even, we make all the very utmost, to the extremest point where truth assuages patriotism. The whole of our neighbourhood took this matter from a proper point of view, and sent me such an invitation to a public

dinner, that I was obliged to show them all the corners of the road, when the stupid fellows thought it safer to conduct me home again.

Upon that festive occasion, also, Sandy Macraw took a great deal too much, so entirely in honour of me that I felt the deepest goodwill towards him before the evening was over, even going so far, it appears, as to discharge him from all back-rent for the use of my little frigate. I certainly could not remember such an excess of generosity, upon the following morning; until he pulled off his hat and showed me the following document inscribed with a pencil on the lining: "Dearest and best of friends, —After the glorious tribute paid by the generous Scotchman to the humble but warm-hearted Cambrian, the latter would be below contempt if he took a penny from him. Signed DAVID LLEWELLYN; witness Rees Hopkins, chairman, his mark."

After this, and the public manner of my execution, there was nothing to be said, except that Sandy Macraw was below contempt for turning to inferior use the flow of our finest feelings. Therefore I went, with some indignation, to resume possession of my poor boat, which might as well have been Sandy's own, during the last five years and more. However, I could not deny that the Scotchman had kept his

part of the contract well, for my boat was beautifully clean and in excellent repair; in a word, as good as new almost. So I put Miss Delushy on board of her, with Bunny for the lady's-maid, and finding a strong ebb under us, I paddled away towards Sker and landed bravely at Pool Tavan.

For poor Black Evan lay now in our churchyard by the side of his five bold sons, having beheld the white horse as plainly as any of the Coroner's jury. The reason was clear enough to all who knew anything of medicine, to wit, his unwise and pernicious step in prostituting his constitution to the use of water.

If any unfortunate man is harassed with such want of self-respect, and utter distrust of Providence, as well as unpleasancy of behaviour towards all worthy neighbours, and black ingratitude to his life, as to make a vow for ever never to drink any good stuff again, that man must be pitied largely; but let no one speak harshly of him; because he must so soon be dead. And this in half the needful time, if formerly he went on too much.

Poor Moxy now, with young Watkin only, carried on this desert farm. It was said that no farmer, ever since the Abbots were turned out, could contrive to get on at Sker. One after the other failed to get a

return for the money sunk into the desolate sandy soil. Black Evan's father took the place with a quarter of a bushel heaped with golden guineas of Queen Anne. And very bravely he began, but nothing ever came of it, except that he hanged himself at last, and left his son to go on with it. What chance was there now for Moxy, with no money, and one son only, and a far better heart than head?

Nevertheless she would not hear for one moment of such a thing as giving up Delushy. This little maid had a way of her own of winding herself into people's hearts, given to her by the Lord Himself, to make up for hard dealings. Moxy loved her almost as much as her own son Watkin, and was brought with the greatest trouble to consent to lose her often, for the sake of learning. Because there never could be at Sker the smallest chance of growing strongly into education. And everybody felt that Bardie was of a birth and nature such as demanded this thing highly.

However, even this public sentiment might have ended in talk alone, if Lady Bluett had not borne in mind her solemn pledge to me. Roger Berkrolles would have done his best, of course, to see to it; but his authority in the parish hung for a while upon female tongues, which forced him to be most cautious.

So that I, though seven years absent, am beyond doubt entitled to the credit of this child's scholarship. I had seen the very beginning of it, as I must have said long ago, but what was that compared with all that happened in my absence? Berkrolles was a mighty scholar (knowing every book almost that ever in reason ought to have been indited or indicted), and his calm opinion was, that "he never had led into letters such a mind as Bardie's!"

She learned more in a week almost, than all the rising generation sucked in for the quarter. Not a bit of milching knowledge could he gently offer her, ere she dragged the whole of it out of his crop, like a young pigeon feeding. And sometimes she would put such questions that he could do nothing more than cover both his eyes up!

All such things are well enough for people who forget how much the body does outweigh the mind, being meant, of course, to do so, getting more food, as it does, and able to enjoy it more, by reason of less daintiness. But for my part, I have always found it human prudence to prevent the mind, or soul, or other parts invisible, from conspiracy to outgo, what I can see, and feel, and manage, and be punished for not heeding—that is to say, my body.

Now the plan arranged for Bardie was the most

perfect that could be imagined, springing from the will of Providence, and therefore far superior to any human invention. Master Berkrolles told me that a human being may be supposed to consist principally of three parts—the body, which is chiefly water (this I could not bear to hear of, unless it were salt water, which he said might be the case with me); the mind, which may be formed of air, if it is formed of anything; and the soul, which is strong spirit, and for that reason keeps the longest.

Accordingly this homeless maiden's time was so divided, that her three parts were provided for, one after other, most beautifully. She made her rounds, with her little bag, from Sker to Candleston Court, and thence to Master Berkrolles at my cottage, and back again to Sker, when Moxy could not do without her. She would spend, perhaps, a fortnight at Candleston, then a fortnight in Newton village, and after that a month at Sker, more or less, as might be, according to the weather and the chances of conveyance.

At Candleston, of course, she got the best of bodily food as well; but Lady Bluett made a point of attending especially to her soul, not in a sanctimonious way, but concerning grace, and manners, and the love of music, and the handling of a knife and fork, and

all the thousand little things depending on that part of us. And here she was made a most perfect pet, and wore very beautiful clothes, and so on; but left them all behind, and went as plain as a nun to Newton, as soon as the time arrived for giving her mind its proper training.

Now when her mind was ready to burst with the piles of learning stored in it, and she could not sleep at night without being hushed by means of singing, Moxy would come from Sker to fetch her, and scold both the Master and Bunny well, for the paleness of Delushy's face, and end by begging their pardon and bearing the child away triumphantly, with Watkin to carry the bag for her.

And then for a month there was play, and sea-air, and rocks to climb over, and sandhills, and rabbits and wild-fowl to watch by the hour, and bathing throughout the summer-time, and nothing but very plain food at regular intervals of fine appetite.

So the over-active mind sank back to its due repose, and the tender cheeks recovered, with kind Nature's nursing, all the bloom the flowers have, because they think of nothing. Also the lightsome feet returned, and the native grace of movement, and the enjoyment of good runs, and laughter unrepressed but made harmonious by discipline. And then the

hair came into gloss, and the eyes to depths of brightness, and all the mysteries of wisdom soon were tickled out of her.

This was the life she had been leading, now for some six years or more; and being of a happy nature, she was quite contented. In the boat I did my utmost, that day, to examine her as to all her recollections of her early history. But she seemed to dwell upon nothing now, except the most trifling incidents, such as a crab lifting up the cover one day when Old Davy was boiling him, or "Dutch" being found with a lot of small Dutches, and nobody knew where they came from. She had no recollection of any boat, or even a Coroner's inquest; and as to papa, and mama, and brother—she put her hand up to her beautiful forehead, to think, and then wondered about them.

Having cleverly brought you thus to a proper acquaintance with the present situation, I really think that you must excuse me from going into all Moxy's transports, called forth by the sight of me.

In spite of all that, I always say in depreciation of myself (ay, and often mean it too), nobody can have failed to gather that my countrymen at large, and (which matters more) my countrywomen, take a most kind view of me. And it would have been hard indeed if Moxy could not find a tear or two. And

Watkin now was a fine young fellow, turned of twenty some time ago, straight as an arrow, and swift as a bird, but shy as a trout in a mountain-stream. From a humble distance he admired Miss Delushy profoundly, and was ever at her beck and call; so that of course she liked him much, but entertained a feminine contempt for such a fellow.

CHAPTER LII.

GREAT MARCH OF INTELLECT.

Now I come to larger actions, and the rise of great events, and the movements of mankind, enough to make their mother earth tremble, and take them for suicides, and even grudge her bosom for their naked burial. Often had I longed for war, not from love of slaughter, but because it is so good for us. It calls out the strength of a man from his heart, into the swing of his legs and arms, and fills him with his duty to the land that is his mother; and scatters far away small things, and shows beyond dispute God's wisdom, when He made us male and female.

The fair sex (after long peace) always want to take the lead of us, having rash faith in their quicker vigour of words and temper. But they prove their goodness always, coming down to their work at once, when the blood flows, and the bones are split into small splinters, and a man dies bravely in their arms, through doing his duty to them.

But though war is good, no doubt (till men shall be too good for it), there was not one man as yet in Great Britain, who would have gone of his own accord into the grand and endless war at this time impending. Master Roger Berkrolles told me that throughout all history (every in and out of which he knew, while pretending otherwise) never had been known such war, and destruction of God's men, as might now be looked for. He said that it was no question now of nation against nation, such as may be fought out and done with, after rapid victory; neither a piece of mere covetousness for a small advance of dominion; nor even a contest of dynasties, which might prove the tougher one. But that it was universal clash; half of mankind imbittered to a deadly pitch with the other half; and that now no peace could be, till one side was crushed under.

These things were beyond my grasp of widest comprehension, neither could I desire a war, begun about nothing, anyhow. If the Frenchmen insulted our flag, or wanted back some of their islands, or kept us from examining their customs (when imported), no true Briton could hesitate to keep his priming ready.

But at present they were only plucking up courage to affront us, being engrossed with their own looseness, and broad spread of idiocy. For they even

went the length of declaring all men to be equal, the whole world common property, and the very names of the months all wrong! After this it was natural, and one might say the only sensible thing they ever did, to deny the existence of their Maker. For it could hardly be argued that the Almighty ever did lay hand to such a lot of scoundrels.

Now if these rats of the bilge-hole had chosen to cock their tales in their dirt, and devour one another, pleasure alone need have been the feeling of the human race looking down at them. But the worst of it was that real men, and women, far above them, took up their filthy tricks and antics, and their little buck-jumps, and allowed their judgment so to be taken with grimaces—even as a man who mocks a fit may fall into it—that in every country there were "sympathisers with the great and glorious march of intellect."

In Devonshire, I had heard none of all this, for none of the servants ever set eyes, or desired to do so, on "public journals." They had heard of these, but believed them to be very dangerous and wicked things; also devoid of interest, for what was the good of knowing things which anybody else might know?* And even if they had taken trouble ever

* That intelligent view still holds its own. A Devonshire

to hear of the great outbreak, they would have replied (until it led to recruiting in their own parish), "Thiccy be no consarn to we."

But in our enlightened neighbourhood things were very different. There had long been down among us ever so many large-minded fellows, anxious to advance mankind, by great jumps, towards perfection. And in this they showed their wisdom (being all young bachelors) to strive to catch the golden age before they got rheumatics.

However, to men whose life has been touched with the proper grey and brown of earth, all these bright ideas seemed a baseless dance of rainbows. Man's perfection was a thing we had not found in this world; and being by divine wisdom weaned from human pride concerning it, we could be well content to wait our inevitable opportunity for seeking it in the other world. We had found this world wag slowly; sometimes better, and sometimes worse, pretty much according to the way in which it treated us. Neither had we yet perceived, in the generation newly breeched, any grand advance, but rather a very poor backsliding, from what we were at their

farmer challenged me, the other day, to prove, "Whatt be the gude of the papper, whan any vule can rade un?"—Edr. M. of S.

time of life. We all like a strong fellow when we see him; and we all like a very bright child, who leaps through our misty sense of childhood. To either of these an average chap knocks under, when quite sure of it. And yet, in our parish, there was but one of the one sort, and one of the other. Bardie, of course, of the new generation; and old Davy of the elder. It vexes me to tell the truth so. But how can I help it, unless I spoil my story?

Ever so many people got a meeting in the chapel up, to sign a paper, and to say that nobody could guess the mischief done by all except themselves. They scouted the French Revolution as the direct work of the devil; and in the very next sentence vowed it the work of the seventh angel, to shatter the Church of England. They came with this rubbish for me to sign; and I signed it (and some of them also) with my well-attested toe and heel.

After such a demonstration, any man of candid mind falls back on himself, to judge if he may have been too forcible. But I could not see my way to any cross-road of repentance; and when I found what good I had done, I wished that I had kicked harder. By doing so, I might have quenched a pestilential doctrine; as every orthodox person told me, when they heard how the fellows ran. But—as my bad

luck always conquers—I had but a pair of worn-out pumps on, and the only toe which a man can trust (through his own defects of discipline) happened to be in hospital now, and short of spring and flavour. Nevertheless some good was done. For Parson Lougher not only praised me, but in his generous manner provided a new pair of shoes for me, to kick harder, if again so visited. And the news of these prevented them.

But even the way these fellows had to rub themselves was not enough to stop the spreading of low opinions; for the strength of my manifestation was impressive rather than permanent. Also all the lower lot of Nonconformists and schismatics ran with their tongues out, like mad dogs, all over the country raving, snapping at every good gentleman's heels, and yelping that the seventh vial was open, and the seventh seal broken. To argue with a gale of wind would show more sense than to try discussion with such a set of ninnies; and when I asked them to reconcile their admiration of atheism with their religious fervour, one of them answered bravely that he would rather worship the Goddess of Reason than the God of the Church of England.

However, the followers of John Wesley, and all the respectable Methodists, scouted these ribalds as

much as we did; and even Hezekiah had the sense to find himself going too far with them, and to repair the seventh seal, and clap it on Hepzibah's mouth. For how could he sell a clock, if time was declared by the trumpet to be no more?

Amid this universal turmoil, uproar, and upheaving, I received a letter from Captain Bampfylde, very short, and without a word of thanks for what I had done for him, but saying that he was just appointed to the Bellona, 74, carrying 6 carronades on the poop; that she was fitting now at Chatham, and in two months' time would be at Spithead, where he was to man her. He believed that the greater part of the fine ship's company of the Thetis would be only too glad to sail under him, and he was enabled to offer me the master's berth, if I saw fit. He said that he knew my efficiency, but would not have ventured to take this step but for what I had told him about my thorough acquirement of navigation under the care of a learned man. After saying that if I reported myself at Narnton Court by the end of October he would have me cared for and sent on, he concluded with these stirring words:—

"There is a great war near at hand; our country will want every man, young or old, who can fight a gun."

These last words fixed my resolve. I had not been very well treated, perhaps; at any rate, my abilities had not been recognised too highly, lest they should have to be paid for with a little handsomeness. But a man of large mind allows for this, feeling that the world, of course, would gladly have him at half-price. But when it came to talking of the proper style to fight a gun, how could I give way to any small considerations?

Fuzzy and Ike were stealing rock at this particular period in a new ketch called the Devil (wholly in honour of Parson Chowne); and through these worthy fellows, and Bang (now the most trustworthy of all), I sent a letter to Narnton Court, accepting the mastership of his Majesty's ship of the line, Bellona.

Now everybody in earnest began to call me "Captain Llewellyn"—not at my own instigation, but in spite of all done to the contrary. The master of a ship must be the captain, they argued, obstinately; and my well-known modesty had the blame of all that I urged against it. But I need not say any more about it; because the war has gone on so long, and so many seamen have now been killed, that the nation has been stirred up to learn almost a little about us.

*

While I was dwelling on all these subjects, who should appear but Miss Delushy, newly delivered from Candleston Court, on her round of high education? And to my amazement, who but Lieutenant Bluett delivered her? I had not even heard that he was come home; so much does a man, when he rises in life, fail in proper wakefulness! But now he leaped down from the forecastle, and with a grave and most excellent courtesy, and his bright uniform very rich and noble, and his face outdoing it, forth he led this little lady, who was clad in simple grey. She descended quite as if it was the proper thing to do; and then she turned and kissed the tips of her fingers to him gracefully. And she was not yet eleven years old! How can we be amazed at any revolutions after this?

"Bardie!" I cried, with some indignation, as if she were growing beyond my control; and she stood on the spring of her toes exactly as she had done when two years old, and offered her bright lips for a kiss, to prove that she was not arrogant. None but a surly bear could refuse her; still my feelings were deeply hurt, that other people should take advantage of my being from home so much, to wean the affections of this darling from her own old Davy, and perhaps to set up a claim for her.

Berkrolles knew what my rights were; and finding him such a quiet man, I gave it to him thoroughly well, before I went to bed that night. I let him know that his staying there depended wholly upon myself; not only as his landlord, but as holding such a position now in Newton, and Nottage, and miles around, that the lifting of my finger would leave him without a scholar or a crust. Also I wished him to know that he must not, as a wretched landsman, take any liberties with me, because I had allowed him gratis to impart to me the vagueness of what he called "Mathematics," in the question of navigation. Of that queer science I made out some; but the rest went from me, through the clearness of my brain (which let things pass through it); otherwise I would have paid him gladly, if he had earned it. But he said (or I may myself have said, to suggest some sense to him) that my brain was now too full of experience for experiments. And of all the knowledge put into me by this good man carefully, and I may say laboriously, I could not call to mind a letter, figure, stroke, or even sign, when I led the British fleet into action, at the battle of the Nile. Nevertheless, it may all have been there, steadily underlying all, coming through great moments, like a quiet perspiration.

But if I could not take much learning, here was some one else who could; and there could be no finer sight for lovers of education than to watch old Mr Berkrolles and his pupil entering into the very pith of everything. I could not perceive any cause for excitement, in a dull matter of this sort; nevertheless they seemed to manage to get stirred up about it. For when they came to any depth of mystery for fathoming, it was beautiful to behold the long white hair and the short brown curls dancing together over it. That good old Roger was so clever in every style of teaching, that he often feigned not to know a thing of the simplest order to him; so that his pupil might work it out, and have a bit of triumph over him. He knew that nothing puts such speed into little folk and their steps—be they of mind or body—as to run a race with grown-up people, whether nurse or tutor.

But in spite of all these brilliant beams of knowledge now shed over her, our poor Bardie was held fast in an awkward cleft of conscience. I may not have fully contrived to show that this little creature was as quick of conscience as myself almost; although, of course, in a smaller way, and without proper sense of proportions. But there was enough of it left to make her sigh very heavily, lest she might have gone too far in one way or the other. Her meaning

had been, from her earliest years, to marry, or be married. She had promised me through my grey whiskers often (with two years to teach her her own mind), never, as long as she lived, to accept any one but old Davy. We had settled it ever so many times, while she sate upon my shoulder; and she smacked me every now and then, to prove that she meant matrimony. Now, when I called to her mind all this, she said that I was an old stupid, and she meant to do just what she liked; though admitting that everybody wanted her. And after a little thought she told me, crossing her legs (in the true old style), and laying down her lashes, that her uncertainty lay between Master Roger and Mr Bluett. She had promised them both, she did believe, without proper time to think of it; and could she marry them both, because the one was so young and the other so old? I laid before her that the proper middle age of matrimony could not be attained in this way; though in the present upside-down of the world it might come to be thought of. And then she ran away and danced (exactly as she used to do), and came back with her merry laugh to argue the point again with me.

Before I set off for Narnton Court, on my way to join the Bellona, Lieutenant Bluett engaged my boat

and my services, both with oar and net, for a day's whole pleasure off shore and on. I asked how many he meant to take, for the craft was a very light one; but he answered, "As many as ever he chose, for he hoped that two officers of the Royal Navy knew better than to swamp a boat in a dead calm such as this was." My self-respect derived such comfort from his outspoken and gallant way of calling me a brother officer (as well as from the most delicate air of ignorance which he displayed when I took up a two-guinea piece which happened to have come through my roof at this moment perhaps, or at any rate somehow to be lying in an old tobacco-box on my table), that I declared my boat and self at his command entirely.

We had a very pleasant party, and not so many as to endanger us, if the ladies showed good sense. Colonel Lougher and Lady Bluett, also the lieutenant, of course, and a young lady staying at Candleston Court, and doing her utmost to entrap the youthful sailor—her name has quite escaped me—also Delushy, and myself. These were all, or would have been all, if Master Rodney had not chanced, as we marched away from my cottage, with two men carrying hampers, to espy, in the corner of the old well, a face so sad, and eyes so black, that they pierced his happy and genial heart.

"I'll give it to you, you sly minx," I cried, "for an impudent, brazen trick like this. What orders did I give you, Miss? A master of a ship of the line, and not master of his own grandchild!"

The young lieutenant laughed so that the rushes on the sandhills shook, for he saw in a moment all the meaning of this most outrageous trick. Bunny, forgetting her grade in life, had been crying, ever since she awoke, at receiving no invitation to this great festivity. She had even shown ill-will and jealousy towards Bardie, and a want of proper submission to her inevitable rank in the world. I perceived that these vile emotions grew entirely from the demagogic spirit of the period, which must be taken in hand at once. Wherefore I boxed her ears with vigour, and locked her into an empty cupboard, there to wait for our return, with a junk of bread and a cheese-rind. However, she made her way out, as her father had done with the prison of Dunkirk; and here she was in spite of all manners, good faith, and discipline.

"Let her come; she deserves to come; she shall come," Master Rodney cried; and as all the others said the same, I was forced to give in to it; and upon the whole I was proud perhaps of our Bunny's resolution. Neither did it turn out ill, but rather a

good luck for us, because the young lady who wooed the lieutenant proved her entire unfitness for a maritime alliance, by wanting, before we had long been afloat, although the sea was as smooth as a duck-pond, some one to attend upon her.

Every one knows what the Tuskar Rock is, and the caves under Southern Down ; neither am I at all of a nature to dwell upon eating and drinking. And though all these were of lofty order, and I made a fire of wreck-wood (just to broil some collops of a sewin, who came from the water into it, through a revival of my old skill ; and to do a few oysters in their shells, with their gravy sputtering, to let us know when they were done, and to call for a bit of butter), no small considerations, or most grateful memories of flavour could have whispered to me twice, thus to try my mouth with waterings over such a cookery. But I have two reasons for enlarging on this happy day ; and these two would be four at once, if any one contradicted them.

My chief reason is that poor dear Bardie first obtained a pure knowledge of her desolate state upon that occasion ;—at least so far as we can guess what works inside the little chips of skulls that we call babyish. Everybody had spoiled her so (being taken with her lovingness, and real newness of going on,

and power to look into things, together with such a turn for play as never can be satiated in a world like ours; not to mention heaps of things which you must see to understand), let me not overdo it now, in saying that this little dear had taken such good education, through my liberal management, as to long to know a little more about herself, if possible.

This is a very legitimate wish, and deserving of more encouragement than most of us care to give to it; because so many of us are not the waifs and strays, and salvage only, but the dead shipwrecks of ourselves; content with the bottom of the great deep, only if no shallow fellows shall come diving down for us.

Having the joy of sun and sea, and the gratitude for a most lovely dinner, such as none could take from me, I happened to lie on my oars and think, while all my passengers roved on the rock. They were astray upon bladder-weed, pop-weed, dellusk, oar-weed, ribbons, frills, kelp, wrack, or five-tails—anything you like to call them, without falling over them. My orders were to stand off and on, till the gentry had amused themselves. Only I must look alive; for the Tuskar rock would be two fathoms under water, in about four hours, at a mile and a half from the nearest land.

The sunset wanted not so much as a glance of sea to answer it, but lay hovering quietly, and fading beneath the dark brows of the cliffs; which do sometimes glorify, and sometimes so discourage it. The meaning of the weather and the arrangement of the sky and sea, was not to make a show for once, but to let the sunset gently glide into the twilight, and the twilight take its time for melting into starlight. This I never thus have watched except in our old island.

There was not a wave to be seen or felt, only the glassy heave of the tide lifted my boat every now and then, or lapped among the wrinkles of the rocks, and spread their fringes. Not a sound was in the air, and on the water nothing, except the little tinkling softness of the drops that feathered off from my suspended oar-blades.

Floating round a corner thus, I came upon a sight as gently sad as sky and sea were. A little maid was leaning on a shelf of stone with her hair dishevelled as the kelp it mingled with. Her plain brown hat was cast aside, and her clasped hands hid her face, while her slender feet hung down, and scarcely cared to paddle in the water that embraced them. Now and then a quiet sob, in harmony with the evening tide, showed that the storm of grief was over, but the calm of deep sorrow abiding.

"What is the matter, my pretty dear?" I asked, after landing, and coaxing her. "Tell old Davy; Captain David will see the whole of it put to rights."

"It cannot be put to yights," she answered, being even now unable to pronounce the *r* aright, although it was rather a lisp than any clear sound that supplied its place; "it never can be put to yights: when the other children had fathers and mothers, God left me outside of them; and the young lady says that I must not aspiya ever to marry a gentleman. I am only fit for Watkin, or Tommy-Toms, or nobody! Old Dyo, why did I never have a father or a mother?"

"My dear, you had plenty of both," I replied; "but they were shipwrecked, and so were you. Only before the storm came on, you were put into this boat somehow, nobody living can tell how, and the boat came safe, though the ship was wrecked."

"This boat!" she cried, spreading out her hands to touch it upon either side—for by this time I had shipped her—"was it this boat saved me?"

"Yes, you beauty of the world. Now tell me what that wicked girl had the impudence to say to you."

This I need not here set down. Enough that it flowed from jealousy, jealousy of the lowest order,

caused by the way in which Lieutenant Rodney played with Bardie. This of course interfered with the lady's chances of spreading nets for him, so that soon she lost her temper, fell upon Delushy, and upbraided her for being no more than an utterly unknown castaway.

CHAPTER LIII.

BEATING UP FOR THE NAVY.

My other reason for setting down some short account of that evening was to give you a little peace, and sense of gratitude to the Lord, for our many quiet sunsets, and the tranquillity of our shores. It really seems as if no other land was blest as ours is, with quiet orderly folk inside it, and good rulers over it, and around it not too much of sun or moon, or anything, unless it may be, now and then, a little bit of cloudiness. And this love of our country seems ever to be strongest, whether at departing for the wars with turbulent nations, or upon returning home, as soon as we have conquered them. But now for a long time, I shall have very little peace to dwell upon.

At Narnton Court I found no solace for my warmth of feeling. Polly had been sent out of the way, on purpose, because I was coming; which was a most

unhandsome thing on the part of Mrs Cockhanter-bury. For the very expectation which had buoyed me up at a flattish period, and induced me to do without three quids of cross-cut negrohead, was my simple and humble looking forward to my Polly. I knew that I was a fool, of course; but still I could not help it; and I had got on so well among young women always, that I found it very hard to miss the only chance I cared for. I feared that my age was beginning to tell; for often, since I had been ashore, my rheumatics had come back again. Neither was that my only grief and source of trouble at this time; but many other matters quite as grave combined against me. Heaviside was not there to talk, and make me hug my singleness; nor even Jerry Toms, nor the cook, who used to let me teach her. It was not that all these had left the place for any mischief. In an ancient household such a loss is not allowable. All meant to come back again, when it suited their opportunities, and each perceived that the house was sure to go to the dogs in the absence of themselves and one another. Heaviside had found Nanette (in spite of my best prognostics) overget her seventh occasion of producing small Crappos, and his natural disappointment with her led to such words that he shouldered his bundle and made off for Spithead, in

company with Jerry, who was compelled to forsake his creditors. And as for the cook, I did hear, though unable to believe it, that she was in trouble about a young fellow scarcely worthy to turn her jack.

In other respects I found that nothing of much importance had occurred since I was there in the summer-time. Sir Philip continued to trust in the Lord, and the Squire to watch the sunsets; neither had the latter been persuaded to absolve his brother. The Captain had been at home one or two days, inquiring into my discovery of the buried dolls. He did not attach so much importance to this matter as his father had done, but said that it made a mysterious question even more mysterious. And failing, as a blunt sailor would, to make either head or tail of it, and being disgusted with his brother for refusing to see him, he vowed to remain in the house no longer, but set off for Pomeroy Castle again, where he had formed a close friendship with the eldest son of the owner. His lady-love, the fair Isabel, was not living there now, but might very easily be met with; for on coming of age three years ago, she had taken possession of her domain, "Carey Park," a magnificent place adjoining the Pomeroy property. It was said that the Earl had done his best to catch the young heiress for his son, and therefore had made a

pretext of the old charge against the Captain, for the purpose of putting a stop to communication with him. But his son, Lord Mohun, upon finding how the young lady's heart was settled, withdrew his suit (like a man of honour), and all the more promptly, perhaps, because he had made up his mind to another lady before Miss Carey came to them.

It was said that the Captain might now have persuaded the beautiful heiress to marry him, and finish their long affection, if he could have thoroughly made up his mind that honour would bear him out in it. For her confidence was so perfect in him, that she left it to his own judgment, herself perhaps longing to put an end to their wearisome uncertainty. Sir Philip heard of it, and came down, to implore them thus to settle themselves. And Captain Bampfylde was so hard set by the nature of the case, that he might have been enticed away from what his conscience told him. This was that the solemn oath which he had taken in the church, with Isabel beside him, to purge himself of all foul charges (ere he made another guilty, if himself were guilty), could not thus be laid aside without a loss of honour. Sir Philip would be the last man in the world to counsel dishonest actions; but being an old man, and reluctant that his race should all expire, he looked upon

that sacrament as no more than a piece of sacrilege, or a hasty pledge of which the Lord would never take advantage.

Nobody knows what might have happened with Captain Bampfylde so beset, and longing to think that he ought to act as everybody told him: but he begged for a night to think over it; and in the morning he received his appointment to the Bellona. Even Sir Philip could not deny that the hand and the will of the Almighty must herein be recognised. And there was a chance of a brush with Spain, about the Nootka Sound, just then; and if anything makes a sailor's fortune, it is a fight with these fine old Dons. A Frenchman is sure to be captured, but not half so sure as a Spaniard; and the hidalgoes do turn out good gold, with good manners behind it. Many ships have I boarded, but with brightest alacrity always a good fat old Spaniard.

Therefore the Captain brushed away any little weakness, and set out for Spithead bravely, in a bachelor condition. And after trying to collect what news there was at Narnton, and finding that I must not think of meeting my dear Polly, I quietly drew my travelling-money, and set forth to join him.

Only every one will reproach me, and have right to do so, if I fail to tell the latest tidings of that

Parson Chowne. People seemed to like this man, because they never could make him out, and nearly all the world is pleased to hear of the rest being vanquished. It seems that a wholly new bishop arose, by reason of the other dying, and this gentleman swore on the Bible to have things in order. When he heard of Chowne, and his high defiance of all former bishops, he said, "Fie, fie! this must not be; I will very soon put this to rights." To follow up this resolution he appointed Tiverton, and the old church of St Peter, for Chowne to bring his young people up to a noble confirmation; also for a visitation of the clergy all around; such as they have now and then, to stop the spread of king's evil.

His holiness the Bishop was surprised to receive this answer: "My dear Lord,—My meet is at Calverly on the day you speak of. We always find a fox hard by; and if he should make for Stoodleigh coverts, I may come down the Bolham road in time to meet your Lordship. At any rate, I shall dine at 'The Angel,' somewhere between three and five o'clock, and hope to find you there, and have a pleasant evening with you. — Yours very truly, R. S. Chowne.

"*P.S.*—If you bring your two Archdeacons, we will have a rubber: but I never go beyond guinea points."

The whole of this was written with Cumberland lead, on the back of a paper, showing how to treat hounds in distemper; and the Bishop was displeased about it, and declined his society; especially as he had invitation to the good Tidcombe Rectory. And there he was treated so hospitably by a very handsome family, that he put up his glass of a noble wine, and saw the sun set through it, and vowed that his Magna Charta, or Habeas Corpus, or Writ of Error—I never can remember which—but at any rate that his royal orders should fall out of his apron-pocket, if he failed to execute them.

In this state of mind he received a letter from Parson Chowne himself, full of respect, and most cleverly turned, as well as describing the Parson's grief at being unable to bring to his holiness any one fit to lay hands upon. The standard set before them had been (before laying on of hands) to say the Lord's Prayer backwards; and there was not one of them up to it. This angered the Bishop to such a degree, that he ordered out his heavy coach with the six long-tailed black horses, and the coachman with cocked-hat and flowing wig, and four great footmen shouldering blunderbusses; himself sate inside with his crosier and mitre, and lawn sleeves, and all the rest of it. Now this was just the very thing the

refractory Parson expected; therefore he rode round overnight and bade every farmer in the neighbourhood send all his hands with pickaxes and shovels, by four o'clock the next morning: also he gathered all his own men there, as well as the unclad folk who were entirely at his orders. Then he sent for Parson Jack, as being the strongest man about there, and imparted his intention to him, and placed him over the workmen.

Early in the afternoon the Bishop's state-carriage was descried moving up the Tiverton highroad, with a noble and imposing aspect. Before he arrived at the cross-road leading off to Nympton Rectory, his Lordship was surprised to see a great collection of people standing on a hill above the road, and all saluting him with the deepest respect. "Not so bad after all," he exclaimed; "brother Chowne has brought his men into good order, which is the noblest use of the Church. Ah! they don't see a bishop every day, and they know when a thing is worth looking at, for their faces are black with astonishment. Holloa, Bob! what's that?"

"Up with the glass, your Lordship," the coachman shouted back; "or it will be all over with you. We are in a damned slough, and no mistake."

And so they were. His Lordship had no time to

slam the windows up, before the coach lay wallowing in a bog of nighty blackness. In it poured, and filled the coach, and nearly smothered his Lordship, who was dragged out at last with the greatest trouble, as black as if he were dipped in pitch. For the Parson had done a most shameful thing, and too bad for even him to think of. He had taken up his private road, and dug out the ground some six feet deep, and then (by means of carts and barrows) transferred to it the contents of a quagmire, which lay handy, and spread the surface again with road-dirt, so that it looked as sound as a rock. Having seen with a telescope from his window the grand success of his engineering, he sent down a groom in smart livery, to present his compliments to the traveller who had happened to lose his way, and fall into a moor-hole, and was there anything he could do to mitigate that misfortune? But the Bishop sputtered out through his chattering teeth that he hoped to hear no more of him, and that none but a Devonshire man was fit to oversee Devonshire parsons. And this made the fifth bishop conquered by Chowne.

To return to our noble selves—that is to say, to the better people dealt with in our history. At the close of this year 1790, to wit, upon Christmas-day of that excellent year of grace, no less than three of

us dined together (of course, with a good many others also) in the Captain's cabin of the Bellona, 74-gun ship of the British Navy, carrying also six carronades. These three were, Captain Drake Bampfylde, of course, the Honourable Rodney Bluett, now our second lieutenant, and the Master of the ship, whose name was something like "David Llewellyn." This latter was now remarkable for the dignity of his appearance and the gravity of his deportment; and although he was only ranked after the youngest of the lieutenants, and just before chits of reefers (called by some people "midshipmen"), and though upon any but festive occasions you might not have spied him at the Captain's table, you could scarcely have found any officer more satisfied with his position and more capable of maintaining it.

We were cruising off the south coast of Ireland, under orders to search all ships that might be likely to carry arms; but as a frigate would have done for that service, as well as, or better than, a 74, we knew that our true commission was to shake together and fall into discipline, and bring other seamen into the same, if we could get any to join us. Having a light wind and plenty of sea-room, we resolved to enjoy ourselves that day; and a very delightful party it was, especially after I was called on to spin a few of

the many true yarns which make me such a general favourite.

After filling our glasses and drinking the health of his Majesty, and of the Navy at large, and especially of our Captain, we began to talk of the state of affairs and the time at which the war might be expected to declare itself. That it must come to a great war with France, not even a fool could doubt, although he might desire to doubt it, ever since the destruction of the Bastile in July 1789. And throughout all the year and a half since that, a wild and desperate multitude had done nothing but abolish all the safeguards of their country, and every restraint upon the vilest rabble. Our wisest plan was to begin at once, before this cruel monster should learn the use of its fangs and the strength of its spring; but, as usual, Great Britain was too slow to seize the cudgel, which might haply have saved a million lives. However, we were preparing quietly for the inevitable conflict, as even our presence that day in the cabin of the Bellona might indicate.

"Master, we are sadly short of hands," said Captain Bampfylde, addressing me; "I shall have a poor report to make, unless we do something. Do you think that we could get on without you, if I sent you on a cruise for a week or so?"

"I think you might, sir," I answered humbly; "if it does not come on to blow, and if you keep well away from land. I have trained Mr Sebright with so much skill, that you may always rely upon him, except in any difficulty."

Nobly I spoke; and the Captain's reply was not very far behind me. "If we carried 750 men," he exclaimed, with generous candour, "we could not hope to have more than one Master David Llewellyn; so diffident, so truthful, so entirely free from jealousy. Gentlemen, is it not so?"

All the officers assented with a pleasant smile to me, and then to one another, so that I hardly knew what to say, except that I could not deserve it.

"Our tender the Sealark is to meet us in the Cove of Cork on New Year's Day," continued Captain Bampfylde; "and after shipping all our stores, she will be for a fortnight at my disposal. Now you know as well as I do, that our complement for war-time is 650 men and boys, and that our present strength is more than 200 short of that. War may be declared any day almost, and a pretty figure we should cut against a French liner of 80 guns. Therefore, unless the Sealark should bring us a very large draft, which I do not expect, my resolve is to man and victual her, for a fortnight's cruise, under some

one who is a good hand at recruiting. Would you like the berth, Master Llewellyn?"

"Sir, I know not anything which I should like better."

Our Captain perceived that the junior lieutenants looked rather glum at being so passed over, from Master Rodney downwards; and though he had the perfect right to appoint any officer he pleased, he knew the true wisdom of shunning offence, by giving some good reason. Therefore he went on again:—

"There is not one of us, I daresay, who would not enjoy this little change. But I think that Llewellyn is our man, simply for this reason. The part to be beaten up first is the Welsh coast, from St David's Head to Penarth. I have heard of many good seamen there, and especially at Llanelly. I think that none of our officers can speak Welsh, except Master David. Even you, Bluett, though coming from Wales, are not up to the lingo."

This settled it in the best-natured manner; and all congratulated me, and wished me good speed in getting hold of old salts, if possible, or else fresh young ones. Not to be too long about it, somewhere about Epiphany Day, in the year 1791, I stretched away for the coast of Wales, being in command of the Sealark, a rattling cutter of 100 tons, with two 6-pound

bow-chasers, and a score of picked men under me. I have no time now to describe emotions, even of the loftiest order, such as patriotism, modesty, generosity, self-abasement, and many others which I indulged in, when I cast anchor off Porthcawl, and they thought that I meant to bombard them. I ordered a boat ashore at once, to reassure the natives, when I had given a waft of my flag, and fired a gun to salute it. But being now in such a position, and the parish to its utmost corners raving on the subject, ashore I durst not trust myself; because without rupture of ancient ties, and a low impression left behind, I could not have got aboard sober again. And after that, could I knock down any of my crew for being tipsy? Nevertheless, I had Bardie, and Bunny, and Mother Jones with her children, and Master Berkrolles, and Charles Morgan, and Betsy Matthews, and Moxy Thomas, all brought in a boat to visit me, besides a few others who came without leave. They all seemed to be very well and happy, and I entertained them beautifully.

That same afternoon we made a hit enough to encourage anybody. We impressed not only my foe the tailor, but also Hezekiah! That is to say, it was not quite what might be called impressment; because, with no war raging yet, we could not resort to

violence; but we made them both so entirely drunk, that we were compelled, for their own sake, to weigh anchor while having their bodies on board. I had a stern fellow of noble mind to back me up at all hazard, and seeing what a sneak Hezekiah was, he gave him six dozen out of hand, with my official sanction. The Horologist to the Royal Family took his allotment worse than almost any man I ever saw; however, for old acquaintance' sake, I would not have him salted. In spite of this, the effect was such that it brought him round to the English Church, and cured him of all French doctrine. And as he gradually began to lose fat, and to dwell upon gunnery, we found his oiliness most useful to prevent corrosion.

Having worked this coast to our utmost power, and gathered a good deal of human stuff (some useful and some useless), pretty near threescore in all, and put upon short rations, we thought that we might as well finish our job by slanting across to Devonshire. Because for the most part, you there may find more body but less mind than ours, which is the proper state of things for the substance of our Navy. Therefore we drafted off to Cork all our noble Welshmen, and made sail for Devonshire.

Now, before telling what we did, I really must

guard against any nasty misconstruction. Whatever had been done to me on the part of Parson Chowne, was by this time so wholly gone out of my heart, and mind, and everything any man can feel with, that nothing was further from my intention than to stir at all in that matter again. I knew that in spite of all the deference paid me now on every side (and too much for my comfort), Chowne would turn me inside out, ten thousand times worse than Stew could. This I like to see done, when anything wrong can be found inside a man. But a thoroughly honest fellow should stick on his honesty, and refuse it.

So when Providence, in a dream, laid before me the great mercy, and I might say miracle, of impressing the naked people, and bringing them under our good chaplain, to be trained from the error of their ways and live, I felt a sort of delicacy as to trespassing thus upon Parson Chowne's old freehold.

These naked folk belonged to him, and though he did not cultivate them as another man might have done, it was not difficult to believe that he found fine qualities in them. And to take them from under his very nose, might seem like a narrow vexation. However, times there are when duty overrides all delicacy ; the Bellona was still short of her number

by a hundred hands or more: and with this reflection I cast away all further hesitation.

We left the Sealark off Heddon's Mouth, a wild and desolate part of the coast, for my object was to pounce unawares on the Parson's savage colony. For what we were going to do was not altogether lawful just at present, although it very soon would be. My force consisted of no less than fifteen jolly well-seasoned tars, all thoroughly armed, all up for a spree, and ready to do any mortal thing at a word or a signal from me. If we could only surprise the wild men, I had no fear as to our retreat, because the feeling of the country would be strongly in our favour, as the abaters of a nuisance long pronounced unbearable.

For five or it may have been six leagues we marched across the moors as straight as possible by compass, except when a quagmire or a ridge of rugged stone prevented us. We forded several beautiful streams of the brightest crystal water, so full of trout that I longed to have a turn at my old calling; and we came in view of Nympton steeple just as the sun was setting. I remembered the lie of the land quite well, ever since that night when the fire happened; so I halted my men in a little wood, and left them to eat their suppers, while I slung my spy-

glass and proceeded to reconnoitre the enemy. Lying flat upon the crest of a hummocky ridge of moorland, I brought my glass to bear through the heather first upon the great Parson's house, which stood on a hill to the left of me, and then on the barbarous settlement. The Rectory looked as snug and quiet as the house of the very best man could be; with a deal more of comfort than most of these contrive to gather around them.

The dens of the tribe that objected to raiment were quite out of sight from his windows; nor were they allowed to present themselves to Mrs Chowne, unless she had done anything to vex him. Shaping my glass upon these wretches, I saw that they were in high festival. Of course I could not tell the reason, but it turned out afterwards that the Parson's hounds were off their feed through a sudden attack of distemper, and therefore a cartload of carrion had been taken down to the settlement. It was lucky that I knew it not, for I doubt whether we should have dared to invade their burrows at such a period.

However, I thought that nothing could be more suitable for our enterprise. Of course they would all overgorge themselves, and then their habit of drinking water, which alone would establish their barbarism, was sure to throw them into deep un-

troubled sleep till sunrise. As soon as one could strike a line from the pointers to the Pole-star (which is a crooked one, by the by), and as soon as it was dark enough for a man to count the Pleiads, I called my men with a long low whistle, and advanced in double file. The savages lay as deeply sleeping as if their consciences were perfect, whereas they could have had none at all. We entered their principal cuddy, or shanty, or shieling, or wigwam, or what you will (for it was none of these exactly, but a mixture of them all), and to our surprise not one awoke, or was civilised enough to snore. Higgledy-piggledy they lay in troughs scooped out of the side of the hill, or made by themselves, of clay and straw (called "cob," I believe, in Devonshire), with some rotten thatch above them, and the sides of their den made of brushwood. Some of the elders had sheep-skins over them, but the greater part trusted to one another for warmth, and to their hairiness.

All this we saw by a blue-light which I ordered to be kindled—for at first it was as dark as pitch—and a stranger or a sadder sight has rarely been seen in England. Poor creatures! they were all so cowed by the brilliant light and the armed men standing in their filthy hovel, that they offered no resistance, but stared at us in a piteous manner, as if we were come

to kill them. Escape was impossible, save for the children, and most of them thought (as we found out afterwards) that Chowne was tired of them and had ordered their destruction.

"Choose all the males from ten years to thirty," I shouted to my men, who were almost as scared as the savages: "don't touch the females, or I'll cut you down. Set another blue-light burning: we don't want any cripples."

Not to be too long with it, I only found three men worth impressing; the others were so badly built, or even actually deformed, and of appearance so repulsive that we could not bear to think of turning them into messmates.

"Now for the boys!" I cried; "we want boys even more than men almost;" but I found that all the children save one had slipped through the sailors' legs adroitly while we were dealing with the men. We could not have caught them in the dark; and more than this, the best-sized of them had popped, like snakes, into burrow-holes, or like a fox into his earth.

But the one who stood his ground, and faced us, was a noble-looking boy, in spite of dirt and nakedness, with long thick tangles of golden hair, and a forehead like a man's almost. He looked up at me

in a bold steady manner, wholly unlike their savage stare, and it struck me that here was the little fellow whom I had saved eight or nine years ago from the horse of Parson Jack. But though he appeared to be twelve years old, I could not make out what he said, except "Yes, yes;" and "me come with oo." Such was his state of education!

I hoisted him on a strong man's back, for the long march had made me feel my years, and perceiving no call to molest the residue, or injure their home—such as it was—we simply handcuffed the three best fellows, and borrowed three pig-whips of their own (made right down ingeniously) so as to drive them to Heddon's Mouth. We durst not halt for a rest until there were three leagues between us and Nympton Moor; then hurrying on at the break of day, we found the Sealark at anchor; and she sent us a boat, at our signal.

Scarcely were we on board of the boat, and pushing off with our capture, when the clash of a horse's hoofs upon rock rang through the murmuring of the waves. We turned and gazed with one accord, for the boat lay broadside on to shore, through the kicking of the naked men when they felt salt water under them, and our quitting good stroke to attend to them. At furious speed a horseman dashed out of the craggy

glen, and leaped the pool where the brook is barred up and vanishes. Down the shingle, and shelves of wrack, he drove his horse into the sea, until there was no firmness under him. He almost laid hold of our boat—not quite; for I struck with an oar at the horse, and scared him, shouting to all of my crew to pull.

Finding himself just a little too late, Chowne gave a turn to his horse's head, and the lather and foam of the spirited animal made a white curdle in the calm blue sea. The horse sprang gladly up the shingle crest—for the shore is very steep there—and he shook himself and scattered brine; and there were three other horses behind him. On one of these sate Parson Jack, and two huntsmen on the other twain, and the faces of these were as red as fire with hurry and indignation.

Only Chowne's wicked face was white, and settled with calm fury; and his style of address to us, just as if we were nothing but dogs of his kennel.

"Ho, you scoundrels!" he shouted out, "hold oars, and let me parley you."

At this I made a signal to my crew to slack from rowing; and I stood up in the boat, and said, "What can we do for your Reverence?"

"Nothing for me, rogues; but much for yourselves.

I will give you five pounds for that child in the stern. I want him for knife-cleaning."

"Would your Worship think fifty too much for him? We put him at fifty, your Worship."

"Fifty, you robbers! Well, then, fifty. Ten times his value to any one. But I have a fancy for him."

"Would your Worship mind saying five hundred down? Look at his hair: he is worth it." For we had washed him in the brook; and his hair in drying was full of gold.

"Who are you?" he shouted, controlling himself, as his habit was, when outbreak became useless. For the dignity of my demeanour, and the nobility of my uniform, also the snowiness of my hair, combined to defeat the unerring quickness of his rapid and yet cold eyes. And so I replied, with an elegant bow—

"Your Reverence, it so happens that my name is 'Old Davy Llewellyn.'"

CHAPTER LIV.

TAMING OF THE SAVAGES.

After a most successful cruise, we returned to our Bellona, and were received as behoves success, with ever so many rounds of cheers. It was true that we had sent before us, and now brought in, an awkward lot; but it is beautiful to see how in a large ship's company, and under a good commander, mere coaster fellows become true seamen, and even land-lubbers learn how to walk. Captain Drake Bampfylde did me the honour of asking my advice, as soon as his own opinion was settled; and I said no more than "Bay of Biscay," which was his own opinion. Here the very utmost of a noble sea awaited us, and none of our landsmen had any heart for fat, or even for lean stuff. We let them go on for a day, perpetually groaning, and after that we provided for each a gallon of salt water, and gave it them through the ship's trumpet, until they entirely ceased from noise.

These prudent measures brought them into such a wholesome state of mind, that really a child might lead them, as by one of the prophets mentioned, when I read my Bible. All of our new hands, I mean, except Hezekiah, and the three wild men.

Unfortunate Master Perkins could not enter into the spirit of our exertions for his benefit; because his mind was unsettled with knowing the hardship both of his back and front. For his back was covered with raw places sitting amiss to the fit of his clothes, while the forward part of his body became too hollow to yield him comfort. But, strange to say, his wrath was kindled not against us for these misfortunes, but against his wife Hepzibah, because she had not predicted them. And for the greater part of a week, the poor fellow lay in a perfect craze upon the orlop-deck, while the ship was rolling heavily. Nothing could persuade him but that he was the prophet Jonah in the belly of the whale, and he took the stowage of our cables for the whale's intestines. You could hear him even from the main-deck screaming at the top of his voice, "Wallow not, O whale! O whale! Lord, Thy servant repenteth, only let not this whale wallow so." So that in spite of all his tricks, hypocrisy, pride, and gluttony, I could not help taking compassion upon him, and having a hammock rigged ten-

derly for him, so that his empty and helpless body fell into a deep sleep as long as the prophet himself could have had it. For I never could show myself at Bridgend, if through my means Hezekiah found the sea his churchyard. On the other hand, the three wild men took their visitation from a wholly different point of view. They had never heard either of God or the devil, and could not believe themselves even worth the interference of either Power. For they did not believe that their souls were immortal (as I suppose they must have been), nor were they even aware of possessing anything more than a body apiece. My own idea of treatment was, that to bring them into self-respect, we should flog the whole three very soundly, and handsomely pickle them afterwards; nor could I see any finer method of curing them of their hairiness. But Captain Bampfylde, who showed the strangest interest in these savages, would on no account have them flogged until they gave occasion. He said that their ideas of justice might be thrown into a crooked line, if the cat-and-nine-tails were promiscuously administered. Whereas I knew that the only way to make a man dwell upon justice is to give him a taste of the opposite. He values the right after this, because he thinks there is none of it left upon earth.

So for the present these three "Jack Cannibals," as our tars entitled them, sate apart and messed apart—and a precious mess it was of it. They soon got over the "Marly Mary," as the Crappos call it; and we taught them how to chew tobacco, which they did, and swallowed it. Only their fear of the waves was such that they could not look over the side of the ship, or even out of a porthole. After a few days we fell in with pelting showers of hail and sleet, with a bitter gale from the north-north-west. I saw the beauty of this occasion to show mankind their need of clothes; therefore I roused up these three poor fellows, and had them thrown into a salting-tub full of ice-cold water. This made their teeth chatter bravely, and then we started them up the rigging, with a taste of rope's-end after them. They ran up the ratlines faster than even our very best hands could follow them, because of the power still left in their feet, through never having owned a shoemaker; but in the maintop they pulled up, and the wind went shivering through them.

Meanwhile I was sedately mounting (as my rank required now) with a very old pilot's coat, well worn out, hanging over my left arm.

"Here, Jack!" I cried to the biggest one; "take this, and throw it over you, to keep your poor bones warm."

The sheaves of the blocks were white with snow (which they always seem to be first to take), and so were the cleats and the weather side of topmast and top-gallant-mast. When you see this, you may make up your mind to have every rope frosted ere morning. Therefore Jack Cannibal looked at the coat, and around it, as a monkey does.

"Put it on," I cried; "poor fellow! put it on to cover you."

He nodded and laughed, as if I were making some joke which he ought to understand, and then he threw the warm coat round his body (now quite blue from cold), but without any perception of sleeves, or skirts, or anything else, except, as it were, like a bit of thatching. And after that he helped us to civilise the rest; so that in course of time we had them in decency far superior to the average show of Scotchmen. And in about the same course of time, Cannibal Jack, I do assure you, became a very good seaman, and a wonderfully honest fellow, without any lies in him. And yet he said things better than the finest lies that could be told, all coming out of his oddness, and his manner of taking tameness. And if a roaring sound of laughter came to the ears of an officer (such as never could be allowed in the discipline of war-time), the officer always lifted lip, to have a smile

accordingly, and said to himself, "I should like to know what Cannibal Jack has said to them."

The two other naked ones, Dick and Joe—as we christened them out of a bucket of tar, without meaning any harm to them—never could be entirely cured of their hereditary shortcomings. We taught them at last to wear clothes, by keeping a sharp leather strap always handy, against which their only protection was a good watch coat, or a piece of sail-cloth; so that after a great deal of pleasantry, we set the ship-tailor to work for them. But no possible amount of strap, nor even cat-and-nine-tails administered by our boatswain's mate (a most noble hand at wielding it), could prevail upon them to abandon their desire for the property of their messmates. They even had the arrogance, as their English grew more fluent, to attempt to reason it out with us.

"Father David," said Cannibal Dick, for they had agreed that now I was their patron, even as Chowne had been; "you take the Crappo ship, the enemy you call it, and then you leave them all their goods, not touch one of anything, and hand back the ship to him."

"Dick, none but a savage would talk such rubbish. We keep the ship, and all it holds, and put the men in prison."

"There for you now, there for you! And you beat us because we take not a great ship, but some little thing lying about in a ship, from our enemies."

"Will you never see things aright, Dick? We are not your enemies, we are your friends; and to steal things from us is robbery."

"You call it friends to steal us from our place, and people, and warm dry sands, and put us on this strange great wetness, where no mushrooms grow, and all we try to eat goes into it. And then you beat us, and drive us up trees such as we never saw before, and force us to hide in these dreadful things!"

Here he pointed to his breeches with a gaze of such hopeless misery, that I felt it would be an unkind thing to press him with further argument. However, the boy was enough to make up for a far worse lot than these were. We soaped him most powerfully, to begin with, even up to the skin of his eyelids, and he made no more objection than a Christian child might have offered. And after we had scraped him dry with the rough side of a spencer, he came out bright, I do assure you, and was such a model figure that we said to one another that he had some right to go naked. For his skin was now as fair and soft as the opening out of a

water-lily, while his golden curls spread out, like flowers of the frogbit. Also his shoulders so nicely turned, and the slope of his sides so clever, with arms and legs of such elegant mould, being thick and thin in the proper places, and as straight as a well-grown parsnip; then, again, his ankles clear, and feet of a character never beheld after any shoe-making.

Our common fellows made so much of this superior little chap, that I was compelled to interfere, and show my resolution: and this required to be done with some small sense of how to do it; otherwise the boy might take the turn of sour grapes with them, and be bullied even more than he had been petted thitherto. Moreover, all the other boys in the ship were longing to fight with him, which (as he was the smallest of all, and not brought up in a Christian manner) would have afforded him no fair play for his nice short nose, or his soft blue eyes. The little dear was as brave as a lion, and ready to fight any one of them; and he used to stand up to my elbow, suing for permission. And now he began to talk so well, that it was very hard upon him not to be allowed to fight a bit; according to the natural issue of all honest converse. However, I would not be persuaded, loving his pretty face as I did; and I

fear that he had unhappy times, through the wickedness of the other boys. Having a stronger sense of mistake than afforded me any happiness—in the thick of my rank and comforts—I could not find any ease until everything, looked at anyhow, and from all bearings contemplated, lay before our Captain. He thought, enough to look wise; and then, he said that really I was fit to see to such little things myself. He had heard of a small boy covered over with a great deal of yellow hair; this should have been fetched off long ago; and what was the barber kept for? Thus it always does befall me, to be thrown back, without guidance, on my own resources. And even Lieutenant Bluett, with whom I next went to hold counsel, was more inclined to stretch and gape, after a heavy spell on deck, than to bring his mind to bear upon this child's adventures.

"Send the poor little beggar in," he said, "and let me look at him, if I can keep my eyes open. Llewellyn, you always did love savages."

"Lieutenant, you would not like me to account you in the number."

"Davy, you might fairly do it, when I come off deck, like this. Send him in, ere I snooze, old fellow."

This I did; and when the boy entered, shyly put-

ting one hand to his forelocks (as I had instructed him), a beam of the newly-risen sun broke in through a bull's eye, and made a golden frame for him. In the middle of this he looked so innocent and so comely, and at the same time so well bred, that Master Rodney's sleepy eyes fell open with wonder at him. This was my doing, of course, entirely. "Soap and discipline" is my signal to the next generation; and nothing else can counteract all the heresies around us. Therefore this little boy's cheeks were brighter than any rose, from towelling; and his beautiful eyes without speck of dirt; and the top of his head as sweet and curly as a feathering hyacinth.

When I perceive that I have had the luck to make an impression my rule is to say nothing at all, but appear to be unaware of it. This rule is founded on common-sense; and it took me so long to find it out, that it ought to be worth something. Otherwise, what offence one gives! And not only that, but consider how seldom the man who succeeds deserves it. Any modest man, like me, upon any moderate success, is bound to examine himself, and feel less confidence than he used to have. His success is enough to prove, according to the ways of the world, that he never can have deserved it.

This remembrance led me now to abstain from even patting "Harry" (as we had named this little fellow) on his golden head at all, lest I should manifest undue pride in a creature of my creation. For such he was, beyond all mistake; and it would have given me pleasure to back him for a crown against any boy in our fleet, or any three in the whole French navy; taking age, of course, and size, into consideration.

"What a fine little fellow!" said Rodney Bluett; "why, he ought to be a midshipman. I had no idea your savages could turn out such young ones. I must see what I can do for him, Davy. Only I can't think of anything now."

Perceiving that I was likely to do more harm than good by pressing the matter just then, I took little Harry away with me, and found him quite full of the young lieutenant's brave appearance and kindly smile. In a word, they were pleased with one another so heartily, and so lastingly, that it was the luckiest day, perhaps, of poor little Harry's unlucky career, when I first commended him to the notice of the Honourable Rodney.

For this latter was now not only a general favourite in the ship, but also a great power; being our second luff, and twice as active as our first was.

He took the boy under his special care, and taught him all sorts of ennobling things—how to read, and write, and spell, and clean boots, and wait at breakfast. So that I felt many qualms sometimes, quite apart from all narrow methods of regarding anything, and springing from the simple fear that the child might be spoiled for his station in life, and fail to become a good seaman.

CHAPTER LV.

UPON FOREIGN SERVICE.

At length, when all sailors' hearts were sick with vain hopes of some enterprise, France did a truly bold thing by declaring war against Great Britain. Those people before this had given occasion for the strongest scandal, by taking their King and Queen in a dastardly manner, and cutting their heads off. Indignation and hot hatred ran throughout England and Wales, at the news; but our Government did no more than politely request that the London agent of these cut-throats should withdraw.

Nevertheless I cannot be wrong—as my pension comes from Government—in saying that to my mind the British Government, at this noble crisis, behaved in a most forbearing, prudent, Christian, generous, glorious, and magnanimous manner. They waited for war to be proclaimed by France, before they accepted it. And then they proved themselves as wholly un-

ready as they ought to be. What finer state of feeling can be shown by any country?

It must have been either the end of February, or the early part of March, in the year of grace 1793, when we heard of this grand and momentous affair. And I remember the date by this, that the onions were sprouted, and we were compelled to make shift with shallots. For calling at Falmouth to victual a little, we sent three boats ashore, and I of course was in command of one. And though we spread abroad and ransacked all the Cornish gardeners' hoards, and gave them a taste of boat-hooks, because they had no proper things, not an onion could we find, except with a crooked thumb to it. Nor were the young ones yet fit to pull; and this fixes the date to a week or so.

And now we found that the whole of us were to be turned over, while the Bellona was refitting, to the 74-gun ship Defence, with orders for the West Indies at once—as was generally believed—to protect our shipping and commerce there.

For although the war had been so very long looked forward to, our Government was not ready yet, but had to send squadrons right and left, to see to our foreign interests; while Portsmouth, Chatham, and even London, had very few ships to defend them.

Our charity never begins at home; as poor Bardie's did in her copy-book. However, it chanced to turn out all right, because the other side was quite as much abroad as we were.

Some of our men were inclined to grumble, at having barely a spree ashore, when they longed for a turn at home again. But the Admiralty settled that, by not paying their back-wages; which is the surest way of all for keeping a fellow well up to his work. His temptation for running is gone, because he has no cash to run with; neither do his people want him while in that condition. This he knows well, and it makes him think; and nine times out of ten he resolves to double what is due to him, and really pocket it when again due, and almost be admired by his own wife.

Therefore most part of us tumbled over from the Bellona into the Defence, after some liberty ashore—which, for a godly man like me, was nothing more than a trial. Captain Drake Bampfylde worked harder than even Parson Chowne's horses were said to do; and as for me——but I will not say, for it now becomes unbecoming. Enough that the Defence cleared outward of the No-man buoy, the very day three weeks from the date of the Bellona standing inwards. We had the wind at E.N.E., as it always is in spring-time.

Now it may seem out of place, and even very rude on my part; but I could not altogether help a strong desire to know how our Captain this time managed in the matter of the female sex. I had my own feelings towards poor young Polly, and a hankering to let her see me (which, however, must not now be gratified on either side), and of course a man feels, when this is the case, that another man must be like him. However, the rules of the service forbade me to put any questions on private affairs to an officer thus set over me; and as for observing him, that was below me, even if time had availed for it. Heaviside also had shown such ill feeling and even downright ingratitude towards me, simply because my position and rank had compelled me to teach him his distance, which he was somehow too stupid to learn (especially since his rash elevation, and appointment as our chief boatswain, which made it the more incumbent upon me to preserve a firm attitude); this fellow, I say, was so utterly wanting in that deference which the Master of a line-of-battle ship not only has a right to expect, but is even bound to exact, that I could not now approach him with inquiries about our Captain. And this became tenfold more painful, as soon as I saw that he knew something.

What French sailors could have a chance with a fleet under Sir John Jervis? I cannot tell how many islands we took, for we could not stop to count them. We caught just the tail of the hurricane of the 12th and 13th of August, which ever will be remembered as the most terrible ever known. None of us had the luck to see the pine bulkhead blown through the palm-tree, or the whole of a sugar-estate set down on the other side of the mountain; but a sailor asks credit for his stories, because he has given it: and otherwise no tales can go on.

I need not dwell on our victories here, except for the sake of Harry Savage, as we had dubbed the poor Nympton boy, for want of legitimate surname. In one little skirmish ashore somewhere, I think in San Domingo, this little fellow, by genuine courage and unusual nimbleness, saved the life of his friend and protector, our Lieutenant Bluett. For while the Lieutenant was engaged, sword to sword, with one vile republican, another of yet more rampant nature made at him, as it were flankwise, and must have given him a bitter stab, if Harry had not with a sudden jump grappled the rogue by the leg so tightly, that down he came on his face with a curse, so far as their language enables them. And we were so enraged, I assure you, at the duplicity of this fellow,

that we borrowed a dirk from a little middy, and gave it to Harry to stick him with. But this our young savage refused to do, and turned quite pale at the thought of it, so that we placed that Equality man at the mercy of the French Royalists, who were acting with us at that period: and these made very short work with him, as justice demanded with a ring-leader of pestilential principles.

Also, in a manner which true modesty forbids to dwell upon—because neither of us had clothes on—I saved the life, before very long, of our new boatswain Heaviside. This worthy fellow was swimming along in his usual independent style, after kicking his good wife's shackles off, when I—having taken the inside of him, as his superior officer—discovered a shark of unusual size desirous to swallow our boatswain. That this should never come to pass was my resolve immediately, although I could not quite see how to be in time to stop it. For Heaviside, with his usual conceit, and desire to show himself off, was floating on his back, with arms laid square, and beard on breast, and legs spread out like rolling-pins. And the shark at twenty knots an hour split the blue water towards him.

Any man but myself would have given him over, or left all the rest to help him, especially after his

utterly republican want of deference. To me, however, such want of sympathy was almost impossible, so that I swam with all speed to Heaviside, where he lay floating grandly.

"Look there!" I shouted; "all up with you, Ben, unless you capitulate." And with these words, I pointed out the fin of the shark advancing. Royal sharks we always called them, being the largest sharks in the world, in and around Port Royal. Heaviside had his fat legs foremost, and the royal shark stopped to look at them.

"Will you or will you not?" I asked, while preserving with some difficulty a proper position behind him—for even a royal shark could have wanted nothing more after Heaviside.

"Oh, Davy, Davy, I will," he answered; "only, only save me."

The look which he gave was now enough to make me sink small questions, especially as the poor fellow managed, being a first-rate swimmer, to offer me almost foremost to the jaws of the shark just opening. Therefore, as this latter creature rolled on his side to make at us, what did I do but a thing which none except a great fisherman could have done? To wit, I plucked from its strings the boatswain's heavy periwig (which had often vexed me, on account of

its pretension), and clapping it on a piece of sugar-cane, which lay floating handy, down the wide jaws of the shark I thrust it, to improve his appetite.

Faithless people may doubt my word, when solemnly I declare to them that this great monster of the waters coughed and sneezed like a Christian. And we found him rolling dead the next morning, with this obstruction in his throat. Thus by much caution and presence of mind, I saved our boatswain not only from the jaws of a shark, but from a far more fatal error, arrogance and downright contumacy, which had made him refuse to touch his hat to his superior officer. Now I need not have mentioned this little affair, except that it bears upon my story, inasmuch as it reconciled Master and boatswain, and enabled them both to work together for the benefit of their Captain. Among poor Heaviside's many weak qualities, one of the most conspicuous was a resolute curiosity. This compelled him to open a great part of the breadth of his nature to the legitimate, or otherwise, affairs of his fellow-creatures.

And being an orthodox champion of wedlock (from the moment he left his wife and children, without any power to draw on him), he helped all the rest of the world in this way, as a host recommends his hot pickles.

Therefore he had been chosen, by very bad taste upon somebody's part, and an utter forgetfulness of me, to be up at our Captain's snap of a wedding, and to say "Amen" to it. What could be worse than a huddle of this kind, and a broad scattering afterwards? If they had only invited me, both sense and honesty would have been there; as well as a man not to be upset by things, however female.

That was their own concern, of course; and it misbecame me to think of it; and I saw, upon further consideration, that my sturdy honesty might not quite have suited them. For women are able, with the help of men, to work themselves up to anything. You may call them the shot and men the powder; or you may take quite another view, and regard them as the powder, with a superior man at the touch-hole. Anyhow, off they go; and who shall ask the reason?

For from what Heaviside told me, it seems that the Captain and his fair Isabel, before our present cruise began, had resolved that no one should ever be able legally to sever them. But one special term of the compact was that the outer world should have no acquaintance with things that happened between them. In other words, that they should leave their excellent friends and relatives all in the dark about

this matter, as well as save the poor Captain's oath, by quitting each other immediately. It is to the utmost extent beyond my own experience to deny, that this is the wisest of all arrangements (if there can be anything wise) after the deed of wedlock; for what can equal severance in the saving of disagreement? However, they had not the wisdom as yet to look at it in this light, and the one wept and the other sighed, when they parted at the churchyard gate; for the Defence must sail at 1 P.M. The lady had been content to come and dwell in a very dirty village of the name of Gosport, so that the licence might be forthcoming from proper people when paid for. Because, of course, in her own county, nothing could have been done without ten thousand people to talk of it. And thus they were spliced, without hoisting flag; for ever spliced, both in soul, and in law (which takes the lead of the other one), and yet in body severed always, till there should come fair repute.

A common man of my rank in life, and having no more than common-sense, must often find himself all abroad with wonder about his superiors. They seem to look at things as if everything and every person were looking back at them again, instead of trusting to the Lord to oversee the whole of it. If I had been

of the proper age, and a lovely rich maid in love with me, would I have stopped even twice to think what the world might say about us? Heaviside's opinion was that the lady wished to hide nothing whatever, but proclaim before all people where and when, and whom she wedded, and how proud she was of him. But the Captain, in his kind regard and tenderness for her feelings, durst not expose her to the pain and sense of wrong which might ensue upon his name coming forward thus, with the county thinking as it did, and himself not there to vindicate. And of course he knew with what vigour and skill vile Parson Chowne would set to at once to blacken his character and to make his bride a most unhappy one. Therefore Sir Philip Bampfylde and the ancient Earl of Pomeroy were the only persons present of their rank and kindred; and both of these confessed the wisdom of the Captain's arguments.

Now on the 30th of April 1794, at about the hour of sundown, our anchor was scarcely beginning to bite in Cawsand Bay, when the barge of the old Port-Admiral was alongside of us. We had long been foregathering what we would do as soon as we got ashore again; but now we could only shake heads and fear that the whole would be disappointment. And thus it proved, and even worse for many

of our company, inasmuch as our orders were to make sail at once for St Helens, and there to join the Channel fleet under Admiral Lord Howe. Therefore we carried on again with a gale from south-west to favour us, and on the 1st of May we brought up in the midst of a large society.

CHAPTER LVI.

EXILES OF SOCIETY.

A FINER sight was never seen than we had now around us; for all the convoy was come together, as well as the British fleet empowered to protect them. I stood in our foretop and counted 152 large sail, nearly 50 of which were men-of-war, and all the rest goodly merchantmen. A sight like this not only strengthens a Briton's faith in Providence, but puts him into a quiet pride concerning his King and country.

We had scarcely swung to our moorings ere we had signal from the Admiral, "Not a man to be allowed ashore. Water and victual all night, and be ready to weigh again at daybreak." Of course we did so, though a hard thing upon us; and new hands desired to grumble, until Captain Bampfylde rigged the gratings. Heaviside now was known to have such a swing of arm, with a flick to it, never being satisfied with his mate's administration, that

never a man of patriotic sentiments encroached on him. We all determined to sail once more, and let the French see what our nature was (although they might hope to find it spoiled, by our being away from home so much); especially when we heard that they had 350 sail or more of merchantmen coming home, all very rich, and fattened up for capture. What we wanted, therefore, was to see our own good traders free from any chance of piracy, and at the same time to stop those French from wicked importations. If in both points we might succeed, and give battle afterwards, our gratitude to the Lord would almost equal our own glory. And we heard that the mob in Paris would starve, failing of all this American fleet.

On the 2d of May the wind fetched back to its proper place at that time of year, north-north-east, with snow-clouds always ready to endorse it; and thus we slipped from our moorings and went quietly down Channel. Concerning the rest, we have no cause to plead for man's indulgence. The Lord continued to baffle us, and would not give us any help to close quarters with the enemy. We fought three days of rolling battle, ending on the 1st of June, after two days of fog interrupting, and not a breath of sleep four nights. Every one says that we fought

very well, having everything so much against us, and the French fleet far superior, carrying also a representative of the human race, large and fat and fluent, of the name of John Bone Andrews, who wrote a noble account of this action, although before it began his feelings led him to seek security in a hole far below the water-line.

But one of the strangest things ever seen, and thoroughly worth considering, was the behaviour of our two savages under heavy fire. Two, I say, although we had three, because Cannibal Jack behaved most steadily, and like a thorough Christian. But the two others most strongly proved their want of civilisation and gross ignorance of war, inasmuch as no sooner did they see the opening of bloodshed round them, than mad they became—as mad, I assure you, as any March hares, the brace of them. In the thick of our combat with the Towerful, up and down the deck these fellows danced in the most conspicuous places, as if inviting every shot, and cracking their knuckles and jabbering. I was for lashing them to the mainmast, but Captain Bampfylde would not allow it; he said that their spirited conduct might encourage and cheer the rest of us. And indeed it was strange to see how the shot flew around without striking them.

Now these poor fellows showed so much attachment and strong confidence towards me, that when we cast anchor in Plymouth Sound (being detached for refitment there, together with eight other ships of the line), I took it entirely upon myself to see them safe home, and to answer for them. Our ship had been knocked about so much, that she needed a thorough good overhauling, and many of us had a month's leave of absence, while carpenters, caulkers, and riggers were working. And these three savages outwent all of us in longing to see their homes again. So it struck me that I might both satisfy them and also gratify myself a little, by taking them under my escort as far as their native mud-holes, and then for a week perhaps enjoying good young Polly's society. Captain Bampfylde not only agreed to this, but said that he should not care twopence if he never saw two of their number again. He meant, of course, Dick and Joe, whose habits of larceny never could be thrashed out; whereas Cannibal Jack was now become as honest a hand as myself almost, and a valuable foretopman. Having pledged my word to bring this one back safe, and the others as well (if they chose to come), I set forth afoot for a cruise across Devon, than which, in the summer, with plenty of money, what can be more delightful? I would gladly have

taken young Harry Savage, now a fine lad of fifteen years, so far as one might guess it; but Jack declared that he must not come, for some reason not to be told to me.

Now it was the flush of summer, very nearly twelve years from the time I first began with. Sunny hedges spread their overlap of roses over us, while the glad leaves danced in time with light and shade to foster them. Every bank of every lane was held at home with flowers, nourished by some flitting rill that made a tinkle for them. And through every gate almost, whenever there was a man to look, the spread of feathered grasses ran, like water with the wind on it.

Even a sailor may see such things, and his heart rejoice and be glad in them, and his perilous life for a while have rest without any thought of anything. Be that so, neither Dick nor Joe ever made glance at anything except the hen-roosts near the road, or the haunt of a young rabbit in the hedge, or the nesting of a partridge. I kept the poor fellows from doing harm, by precept and example too; yet we had a roast fowl every night, except when it was a boiled one. And finding myself in my sixty-fourth year, what could I do but put up with it?

It must be threescore miles, I think, even accord-

ing to the shortest cut, from Plymouth to Nympton-on-the-Moors, and we wandered out of the way, of course, especially after guinea-fowls, which are most deluding creatures, but roast even better than their eggs boil. Also, we got into cherry orchards of a very noble breed; so that we spent a whole day and two nights, without any power to say farewell. And though the farmer's wife put up both hands to us at the window, she sent out the maid to say that we need not be frightened, if we were real sailors. After giving this girl a kiss (to let her know what our profession was), I sent in word that here was the Master of his Majesty's ship Defence, which had defended the British Empire, in the late great victory. That night they made all of us drunk, except me.

Upon these sweet little incidents I must venture to dwell no longer, while having so much of my yarn in the slack, and none but myself to tauten it. Enough that we came in about ten days to the genuine naked colony, without any meaning of surprise, but now as great ambassadors. And the least that we all expected was a true outburst of wild welcoming. Cannibal Jack had announced his intention to convert his relatives, while Dick and Joe only shook their heads, and seemed to doubt the

advantage of it. But we need not have thought of the matter twice, for, strange to say, not one of the savages would for a moment acknowledge us. All the barbarous tribe stood aloof and scowled at their old members with utter abhorrence and contempt, as if at some vast degeneracy. Even Jack's wife, or the woman who might in humanity have been called so, stood moping and mowing at him afar, as if his clothes made a sheep of him, while he with amazement regarded her as if she were only a chimpanzee. Whereupon all of them set up a yell, and rushed with such pelting of mud at us, that we thought ourselves lucky to make our escape without any further mischief.

After hauling out of action in this most inglorious manner, we brought up to refit and revictual at the nearest public-house, a lonely hut where four roads met, and the sign hung from an ancient gibbet. Here we were treated very kindly, and for very little money, so that I was quite astonished after all our feeding. And I happened to say to the landlady that I was surprised to find honesty within a league of Parson Chowne.

"Oh, sir, do you know that dreadful man?" she answered, with her apron up; "or would you like to see him, sir?"

"Madam," said I, with that bow of mine which takes the women captive, "I should like to see him wonderfully; only without his seeing me."

"Of course, of course. All people say that, because of the evil eye he hath. This house doth belong to him. He be coming for the rent again at two o'clock, and he never faileth. Every farthing will be ready now, through your honour's generosity; and if so be you steps in here, when you hear me give three knuckles at the door, you may see him and welcome for nothing; only you must not speak for ever so."

The landlady showed me a little cellar, opening from our sitting-room, and having a narrow half-boarded hatchway bearing upon her sanded parlour, where she designed to receive the Parson. And then she was half afraid lest I might make a noise and so betray her. But almost before I had time to assure her of my perfect secrecy, the dash of horse's hoofs was heard, and the sound of a man's voice shouting.

"Well done!" said I to myself; "good Parson, years have not decreased thee."

His strong step rang on the lime-ash floor, and his silver spurs made a jingle, and lo, there he stood in the sanded parlour, as noble a Chowne as ever. There was not the sign of a spot of weakness or relenting about him; on his shaven face no bloom of

greyness, nor in his coal-black hair one streak. As vigorous, springy, and strenuous seemed he, as when he leaped on board and thrashed me, nearly twelve years agone, as I do believe.

"Woman, where is my money?" he cried, with the old pale frown overcoming him; "twice I have given you time. You know what I always do thereafter."

"Yes, sir, I know what your Reverence doth. Your Reverence never calleth law, but taketh horse-whip to the mans of us."

"Your memory is correct," he answered; "my usual course is to that effect. I have brought my heaviest whip this time, for your husband has shown arrogance. Can you show cause why he should not have it?"

"Yes, your Reverence, here it is. And God knows how we have scraped for it."

With the glow of triumph which a man's face hardly ever shows, but a woman's cannot be denied of, she spread before him all his rent upon an ancient tray, and every piece of it was copper. Thirty-six shillings she had to pay, and twenty-four times thirty-six was there for his Reverence to count. The hostess looked at him, with a chuckle brewing now under her apron strings, and ready to rise to her ample breast, and thence to her mouth, if expedient. But she mistook her customer.

"Woman," said Chowne, in his deep low voice, which had no anger in it; "I am tired of signing warrants."

"Warrants, your Worship! For what, if you please?"

"Warrants for thieves who are foisting sham Irish halfpennies on the public. I see no less than seven of them in this sterling stuff of yours. Three months at the treadmill now for yourself and your husband. Say no more. You have tried a trick. Tiverton jail for you both to-morrow."

And there, if you wanted either of them, you must go to find them, only two days afterward, according to what I was told of it. No Welsh gentleman would have dreamed of behaving to his tenants thus, for trying a little joke with him; but Chowne had no sense of any joke, unless himself began it.

Our three cannibals had been trembling at the sound of the Parson's voice, believing that he would drive them back, and feeling that they had no power to withstand his orders. But luckily we had made such a smoke—all our savages having taken to the use of tobacco gloriously—that when the Parson put his head in, as he must do everywhere, he drew it back in double-quick time, for he hated the weed as old Nick does. And then after calling his groom as

a witness to the Irish coinage, he made him tie the whole of the rent-money in his pocket-handkerchief, and off he set at a good round gallop to make out the warrant. You may depend upon it that we four were very soon off as well, and in the opposite direction, after subscribing a guinea among us to comfort the poor woman, who was sobbing her heart out at her mistake, and at the prospect (as seemed to me) of being confined, in more senses than one, within the walls of a prison. For some time I found myself much at a loss about harbouring my convoy; for though I could trust Jack Wildman—as I now began to call him—anywhere and with anything, this was not the case with the other two, who could never be kept from picking up small things that took their fancy. We were shaping a course for Narnton Court, where I intended to sling my own hammock, and Jack's as well, if agreeable; but I durst not offer to introduce Dick and Joe, for the cause aforesaid. Moreover, they had not yet acquired the manners of good society, which were no little insisted upon in Sir Philip Bampfylde's kitchen. Therefore I thought myself very clever, when a settlement of this question suddenly occurred to me.

This was no less than to settle them both under my old ferry-boat, if still to be found as two years

back, shored up and turned into a residence. Their rations might be sent down to them, and what happier home could they wish for, with the finest air in the world around them, as well as beautiful scenery. And if it should happen to leak a little (as seems only natural), what a blessed reflection for a man of due sentiments towards the Lord, that this water is dropping from heaven upon him, instead of rushing up to swallow him into that outrageous sea!

Accordingly so we contrived this affair. Mr Jack Wildman was introduced, under my skilful naval tactics, into the most accomplished circle on the quarter-deck of our head-cook. And he looked so very gently wild, and blushed in his clothes so beautifully, that there was not a maiden all over the place but longed to glance, unbeknown, at him. So that it seemed a most lucky thing that Polly was down with the small-pox, at a place called Muddiford; wherein she had an uncle. Meanwhile Cannibals Dick and Joe lived in the boat, as happily as if they had been born in it, and devoted their time to the slaying and cooking of Sir Philip's hares and rabbits. It was in vain that the gamekeepers did their best to catch them. Dick and Joe could catch hares, as they boasted to me, almost under the watchers' noses; so

noble was the result of uniting civilised cunning with savage ingenuity.

I can well believe that no other man, either of my rank or age, would have ventured on the step which now I did resolve upon. This was no less than to pay a visit to my poor little Polly, and risk all probabilities of being disfigured by small-pox. For several times it had crossed my mind, that although she was among relatives, they were not like a father or mother to her, and perhaps she might be but poorly tended, and even in need of money perhaps. For her very own aunt, our Mrs Cockhanterbury, would not go nigh her, and almost shuddered when her name was mentioned. Now it seemed to be only fair and honest to let Sir Philip know my intention, so that he might (if he should see fit) forbid me to return to his mansion, bringing the risk of infection. But the General only shook his head, and smiled at that idea. "If it be the will of God, we shall have it, of course," he said; "and people run into it all the more by being over-timorous. And I have often thought it sinful to mistrust the Lord so. However, you had better keep smoking a pipe, and not stay more than five minutes; and perhaps you might just as well change your clothes before you come back, and sink the others to air for a week in the river." I

was grieved to see him so entirely place his faith in Providence, for that kind of feeling (when thus overdone) ends in what we call "fatalism," such as the very Turks have. So that I was pleased when he called me back, and said, "Take a swim yourself, Llewellyn. I hear that you can swim five miles. Don't attempt that, but swim two, if you like. Swim back to us from Barnstaple bridge, and I will have a boat to meet you, with a wholesome wardrobe."

Thus was the whole of it arranged, and carried out most cleverly. I took poor Polly a bunch of grapes, from one of the Narnton vineries, as well as a number of nice little things, such as only a sailor can think of. And truly I went not a day too soon, for I found her in that weak condition, after the fury of the plague is past, when every bit of strengthening stuff that can be thought of, or fancied by, the feeble one may turn the scale, and one cheering glance or one smiling word is as good as a beam of the morning. Then after a long walk, I made my swim, and a change of clothes, exactly as the General had commanded me.

In a fortnight afterwards where was I? Why, under the boat, in a burning madness, without a soul to come nigh me, except Jack Wildman and Sir Philip. These two, with the most noble courage,

visited me through my sad attack of small-pox, as I was told thereafter, although at the time I knew no one. And at a distance around the boat, a ring of brushwood was kept burning, day and night, to clear the air, and warn the unwary from entering. Everybody gave me up for a living Christian any more, and my coffin was ordered at a handsome figure (as a death upon Narnton premises), ay, and made also, like that of the greatest man that I ever did meet with. Not only this, but two Nonconformist preachers found out (as they always do) that in a weak period of my life, when dissatisfied with my pension, I had been washed away by my poor wife into the scuppers of Dissent. Therefore they prepared two sermons on this judgment of the Lord, and called me a scapegoat; while goodness knows what care they took never to lay hands on me.

CHAPTER LVII.

MANY WEAK MOMENTS.

NOTHING less than steadfast faith, and an ancient British constitution, can have enabled me to survive this highly-dappled period. It was not in my body only, or legs, or parts I think nothing of, but in my brain that I felt it most, when I had the sense to feel it. And having a brain which has no right to claim exemption from proper work, because of being under average, I happened to take a long time to recover from so many spots striking inwards. An empty-headed man might have laughed at the little drills into his brain-pan; but with me (as with a good bee-hive early in October) there could not be the prick of a brad-awl but went into honey. And so my brain was in a buzz for at least a twelvemonth afterwards.

Therefore I now must tell what happened, rather as it is told to me, than as myself remember it.

Only you must not expect such truth, as I always give, while competent.

After the master of the ship Defence had proved so unable to defend himself, General Sir Philip Bampfylde, with his large and quiet mind forbidding all intrusion, opened out a little of his goodness to Jack Wildman. There are men of the highest station, and of noble intellect, who do this, and cannot help it, when they meet a fellow-man with something in him like them. There is no vanity in it, nor even desire to conciliate; only a little touch of something understood between them. And now being brought so together perhaps by their common kindliness, and with the door of death wide open, as it were, before them, the well-born and highly-nurtured baronet, and the lowly, neglected, and ignorant savage, found (perhaps all the more clearly from contrast) something harmonious in each other. At any rate they had a good deal of talk by the side of the lonely river, where even the lighters kept aloof, and hugged to the utmost the opposite shore. And the General, finding much amusement in poor Jack's queer simplicity, and strange remarks upon men and things, would often relax without losing any of his accustomed dignity. So while they were speaking of death one day, Jack looked at Sir Philip with an air of deep

compassion and feeling, and told him with tearful eyes how heartily he was grieved at one thing. Being pressed as to what it was, he answered that it was Sir Philip's wealth.

"Because," said he, "I am sad when I think that you must go to hell, sir."

"I go to hell!" Sir Philip exclaimed, with a good deal of rather unpleasant surprise; "why should I do that, Jack? I never thought that you entertained so bad an opinion of me."

"Your Honour," said Jack, having picked up some of my correct expressions, "it is not me; it is God Almighty. I was told afore ever I learned to read, or ever heard of reading, how it was. And so it is in the Bible now. Poor men go to heaven, rich men go to hell. It must be so to be fair for both."

The General had too much sense to attempt to prove the opposite, and would have thought no more about it, if Jack had dropped the subject. But to do this at the proper moment requires great civilisation; while on the other hand Jack sought comfort, needless to men of refinement.

"Your Honour must go there," he said, with a nod of his head which was meant to settle it; "but there is one of your race, or family"—or whatever word of that sort he employed, for he scarce could have come

to any knowledge of things hereditary—"who will go to heaven."

"Many are gone there already—too many," answered Sir Philip, devoutly; "but tell me whom you mean, Jack. Do you mean my son the Captain?"

"Him! no, no. I know better than that. It is plain where he must go to."

"Your Captain! you disloyal fellow. Why, you ought to be lashed to the triangles. But who is it you are thinking of?"

"I know, I know," said Jack, nodding his head; and no more could Sir Philip get out of him. And whenever he tried to begin again, Jack Wildman was more than a match for him, by feigning not to understand, or by some other of the many tricks which nature supplies, for self-defence, to the savage against the civilised. If I had been well, I must have shelled this poor Jack's meaning out of him; whereas, on the other hand, but for my illness he might never have spoken. So it came to pass that he was sent, entirely at Sir Philip's cost, and with a handsome gratuity, to rejoin our Captain in Plymouth Sound, and to carry back Cannibals Dick and Joe, who had scoured away at great speed upon hearing of my sudden misfortune.

Now I will tell you a very strange thing, and quite

out of my experience; even after small-pox, which enlarged and filled me with charity, as well as what I had scarcely room for—increase of humility. This is, that though Captain Bampfylde had some little spare time at Plymouth, he had such command of himself that he never went near his beloved Isabel. Nothing could have so checked a man of heartiness and bravery, except the strongest power of honour, and a long time of chastisement. There was a lovely young woman, and here a fine though middle-aged man, her husband; they loved one another with heart and soul, and they never met, but through a telescope! It may have been right, or it may have been wrong—I should have thought it wrong, perhaps, if the case had been my own—but they pledged their honour and kept it. Drake Bampfylde (like his father) had a strength of trust in Providence. But this trust has no landed security, now that the Lord has found the world so clever, that He need not interfere with it.

The 74-gun ship Defence was known to be the fastest sailer in the British Navy; not from her build alone, or balance, but from my careful trim of her sails, and knowledge of how to handle her. Hours and hours I spent aloft, among lifts, and braces, and clue-garnets, marking the draw of every sail, and

righting all useless bellying. So that I could now have warranted her the first of our Navy to break the line, if rigged according to my directions, and with me for her master. However (while I lay docked like this, careened I might say, and unlikely ever to carry a keel again), the Defence, without my knowledge even, being new-masted, sailed to join the Channel Fleet, with Heaviside acting as her master; and as might have been expected, fell to leeward one knot in three. And even worse than this befell her; for in the second of those two miserable actions, under Hotham in the year 1795, when even Nelson could do nothing, the Defence having now another captain as well as a stupid master, actually backed her mizzen-topsail, in the rear of the enemy, when the signal was to fill and stand on. However, as even that famous ship the Agamemnon did nothing that day, through getting no opportunity, we must forgive poor Heaviside, especially as he was not captain. But the one who ground his teeth the hardest, and could forgive nobody, was the Honourable Rodney Bluett, now first lieutenant of the Defence. By this time every one must desire to know why Captain Bampfylde was not there, as he might have been, and might have made himself famous, but for his usual ill fortune. This had carried him to the

East Indies, before the Defence had finished refitting; and there, with none of his old hands near him, he commanded a line-of-battle ship, under Commodore Rainier; and after some hard work, and very fine fighting, drove the brave Dutchmen out of the castle of Trincomalee, in August 1795, which we came to hear of afterwards.

Thus it was that everybody seemed to be scattered everywhere. None of us happened to hold together, except those three poor savages; and they, by a sort of instinct, managed to get over accidents. For they stuck, with that fidelity which is lost by education, to Rodney Bluett, as soon as ever poor Father Davy failed them. But this is a melancholy subject, and must soon be done with.

Let me, then, not dwell upon this visitation of the Lord for a moment longer than the claims of nation and of kin combine to make it needful. Nor did it seem to matter much for a long time what became of me. The very first thing I remember, after months of wandering, has something to do with the hush of waves, and the soft breath of heaven spread over me. Also kind young voices seemed to be murmuring around me, with a dear regard and love, and sense of pretty watchfulness; and the sound of my native tongue as soft as the wool of a nest to my bosom.

Because I was lying in a hammock, slung, by Colonel Lougher's orders, betwixt the very same mooring-posts (at about half-tide in Newton Bay) which truly enabled the sons of Devon to make such a safe job of stealing his rocks. Not only the Colonel, but Lady Bluett, who generally led his judgment, felt by this time the pleasure of owing true gratitude to somebody. My fatherly care of the young lieutenant had turned him out so nobly.

It misbecomes me to speak of this; and it misbecame me to speak at all, with the sea-breeze flowing over me, the first words of knowledge that I had spoken for how long I know not. Nothing can be too high, or too low, for human nature at both ends; but I ought to have known better than to do the thing I did.

"Give me a pipe," was all I said; and then I turned away, and cared not whether I got my pipe, or whether the rising tide extinguished me.

"Here is your pipe, sir," came in a beautiful voice from down below me; "and we have the tinder ready. Bunny, let me do it now."

That pipe must have saved my life. Everybody said so. It came and went in curls of comfort through the hollow dying places of my head, that had not even blood enough to call for it; and then it

never left my soul uneasy about anything. Hammock and all must have gone afloat, with the rapid rise of the spring, except for Colonel Lougher's foresight.

Who was it that watched me so, and would have waited by my side, until the waves were over her? Who was it that kept on listening, to let me know, while I could not speak? Who was it that gave a little bit of a sigh, every now and then, and then breathed hard to smother it? Who was it, or who could it be, in the whole wide world, but Bardie?

Not only this, but when I began to be up to real sense again, the kindness of every one around me made me fit for nothing. In the weakness of expecting all to take advantage of me (as is done in health and spirits), all the weakness I could find was in my friends and neighbours always labouring to encourage me. This to my mind proves almost the wrongness of expecting people to be worse than we are.

That winter was the most severe, all over Western Europe, known for five-and-fifty years. I well remember the dreadful winter A.D. 1740, when the Severn was frozen with a yard of ice, and the whole of the Bristol Channel blocked with icebergs like great hay-ricks. Twelve people were frozen to death in our parish, and seven were killed through the ice on the sea. The winter of 1795 was nothing to be

compared to that; nevertheless it was very furious, and killed more than we could spare of our very oldest inhabitants.

And but for the extraordinary kindness of Colonel Lougher, that winter must have killed not only me in my weak and worn-out condition, but also the poor maid of Sker, if left to encounter the cold in that iceberg. For, truly speaking, the poor old house was nothing else through that winter. The snow in swirling sheets of storm first wrapped it up to the window-sills; and then in a single night overleaped gables, roofs, and chimney-tops. Moxy and Watkin passed a month of bitter cold and darkness, but were lucky enough to have some sheep, who kept them warm outside, and warmed their insides afterwards. And after that the thaw came. But all this time there was nobody in my little cottage at Newton, but poor Roger Berkrolles, and how he kept soul and body together is known to none save himself and Heaven. For Colonel Lougher and Lady Bluett, at the very beginning of the frost, sent down my old friend, Crumpy the butler, to report upon my condition, and to give his candid opinion what was the best thing to do with me. After that long struggle now (thanks to a fine constitution and the death of the only doctor anywhere on our side of Bridgend),

I had begun to look up a little and to know the time of day. Crumpy felt my pulse, and nodded, and then prescribed the only medicine which his own experience in life had ever verified. Port wine, he said, was the only thing to put me on my legs again. And this he laid before the Colonel with such absence of all doubt, that on the very same afternoon a low and slow carriage was sent for me, and I found myself laid in a very snug room, with the firelight dancing in the reflection of the key of the wine-cellar. Also here was Bardie flitting, light as a gnat in spring-time, and Bunny to be had whenever anybody wanted her. Only her scantling and her tonnage unfitted her for frigate-service.

What had a poor old fellow like me—as in weak moments I called myself—ever done, or even suffered, to deserve to find the world an Inn of good Samaritans? I felt that it was all of pure unreasonable kindness; the very thing which a man of spirit cannot bear to put up with. I have felt this often, when our Parson discoursed about our gracious Lord, and all the things He did for us. A man of proper self-respect would like to have had a voice in it.

This, however (as Hezekiah told us in the cockpit, after we had pickled him), might be safely attributed to the force of unregeneracy; while a man who is

down in luck, and constitution also, trusts to any stout mortal for a loan of orthodoxy. And so did I to our Rector Lougher, brother of the Colonel, a gentleman who had bought my fish, and felt my spiritual needs. To him I listened (for well he read), especially a psalm to which I could for ever listen, full of noble navigation, deeper even than our soundings in the Bay of Biscay.

Every night we used to wonder where Lieutenant Bluett was, knowing as we did from my descriptions (when the hob was hot) what it is to be at sea with all the rigging freezing. When the blocks are clogged with ice, and make mysterious groanings, and the shrouds have grown a beard as cold as their own name is, and the deck begins to slip; and all the watch, with ropes to handle, spit upon their palms, and strike them (dancing with their toes the while) one man to another man's, hoping to see sparks come out. So it is, I can assure you, who have never been at sea, when the barbs of icy spray by a freezing wind are driven, like a volley of langrel-shot raking the ship from stem to stern, shrivelling blue cheeks and red noses, shattering quids from the chattering teeth. Many a time in these bitter nights, with the roar of east wind through the fir-trees, and the rattle of doors in the snow-drift, I felt

ashamed of my cozy berth, and could not hug my comfort, from thinking of my ancient messmates turned to huddled icicles.

But all was ordained for the best, no doubt: for supposing that I had been at sea through the year 1795, or even 1796, what single general action was there worthy of my presence? It might have been otherwise with me there, and in a leading position. However, even of this I cannot by any means be certain, for seamen quite as brave and skilful were afloat at that very time. However, beyond a few frigate actions, and matters far away from home, at the Cape, or in the East Indies, I did not hear of anything that I need have longed much to partake in. So that I did not repent of accepting a harbour-appointment at Plymouth, which (upon my partial recovery) was obtained for me by Sir Philip Bampfylde, an old friend of the Port-Admiral there.

For that good Sir Philip was a little uneasy, after shipping me off last autumn, lest he might have behaved with any want of gratitude towards me. Of course he had done nothing of the kind; for in truth I had raved for my country so—as I came to learn long afterwards—that when all the risk of infection was over, the doctor from Barnstaple said that my only chance of recovering reason lay in the air

of my native land. But at any rate this kind baronet thought himself bound to come and look after me, in the spring of the year when the buds were awake, and the iron was gone from the soul of the earth. He had often promised that fine old tyrant Anthony Stew to revisit him; so now he resolved to kill two birds with one stone, as the saying is.

I had returned to my cottage now, but being still very frail and stupid, in spite of port wine every day, I could not keep the tears from starting, when this good and great landowner bent his silver head beneath my humble lintel, and forbade me in his calm majestic manner to think for a moment of dousing my pipe. And even Justice Stew, who of course took good care to come after him, did not use an uncivil word, when he saw what Sir Philip thought of me.

"Sir," said the General to the Squire, after shaking hands most kindly with me, "this is a man whom I truly respect. There seems to be but one opinion about him. I call him a noble specimen of your fellow-countrymen."

"Yes, to be sure," answered Anthony Stew: "but my noble fellow-countrymen say that I am an Irishman."

"No doubt whatever about that, your Worship,"

was the proper thing for me to reply; but the condition of my head forbade me almost to shake it. If it had pleased the Lord to give me only a dozen holes and scars—which could not matter at my time of life—there would not by any means have arisen, as all the old women of Newton said, this sad pressure on the brain-pan, and difficulty of coping even with a man of Anthony Stew's kind. But, alas! instead of opening out, the subtle plague struck inwards, leaving not a sign outside, but a delicate transparency.'

This visit from Sir Philip did not end without a queer affair, whereof I had no notice then, being set down by all the village as only fit to poke about among the sand-hills, and then to die. But no one could take the church-clock from me, till the bell should be tolling for me; and as a matter of duty I drew some long arrears of salary.

It seems that Sir Philip drove down one day from Pen Coed to look after me, and having done this with his usual kindness, spread word through the children (who throughout our lane abounded) that really none of his money remained for any more sticks of peppermint. It was high time for them to think, he said, after ever so much education, of earning from sevenpence to tenpence a-week, for the good of the

babies they carried. All the children gathered round him at this fine idea, really not believing quite that the purse of such a gentleman could have nothing more to say. And the girls bearing babes were concave in the back, while the boys in the same predicament stuck out clumsily where their spines were setting.

"Drive me away," said Sir Philip to the groom; "drive me straight away anywhere: these Welsh children are so clever, I shall have no chance with them."

"Indeed, your Honour, they is," said the groom with a grin, as behoved a Welshman. "Would your Honour like to go down by the sea, and see our beautiful water-rocks, and our old annshent places?"

"To be sure," said Sir Philip; "the very thing. We have four hours' time to dinner yet; and I fear I have worn out poor Llewellyn. Now follow the coast-line if you are sure that your master would like it, Lewis, with this young horse, and our weight behind."

"Your Honour, nothing ever comes amiss to this young horse here. 'Tis tire I should like to see him, for a change, as we do say. And master do always tell me keep salt-water on his legs whenever."

"Right!" cried Sir Philip, who loved the spree,

being as full of spirits still, when the air took his trouble out of him, as the young horse in the shafts was.

So they drove away over the sands towards Sker, which it is easy enough to do with a good strong horse and a light car behind him. And by this time the neighbourhood had quite forgotten all its dread of sand-storms. In about half an hour they found themselves in a pretty place of grass and furze known as the Lock's Common, which faces the sea over some low cliffs, and at the western end coves down to it. This is some half a mile from Sker House, and a ragged dry wall makes the parish boundary, severing it from Sker-land.

"Drive on," cried Sir Philip; "I enjoy all this: I call this really beautiful, and this fine sward reminds me of Devonshire. But they ought to plant some trees here.

The driver replied that there was some danger in driving through Sker warren, unless one knew the ground thoroughly, on account of the number of rabbit-holes; and the baronet, with that true regard which a gentleman feels for the horse of a friend, cancelled his order immediately. "But," he continued, "I am so thirsty that I scarcely know what to do. My friend Llewellyn's hospitality is so over-

powering. The taste of rum is almost unknown to me; but I could not refuse when he pressed me so. It has made me confoundedly thirsty, Lewis."

"Your Honour," said Lewis, "just round that corner, in a little break of the rocks, there is one of the finest springs in Glamorgan, 'Ffynnon Wen' we call it, the water does be sparkling so."

The groom, having no cup to fetch the water, stood by the horse in the little pant or combe; while old Sir Philip went down to the shore, to drink as our first forefather drank, and Gideon's men in the Bible. Whether he lapped or dipped, I know not (probably the latter, at his time of life), anyhow he assuaged his thirst—which rum of my quality could not have caused in a really sound constitution, after taking no more than a thimbleful—and then for a moment he sate on a rock, soothed by the purling water, to rest and to look around him. The place has no great beauty, as of a seaside spring in Devonshire, but more of cheer and life about it than their ferny grottoes. The bright water breaks from an elbow of rock, in many veins all uniting, and without any cliff above them; and then, after rushing a very few yards through set stone and loose shingle, loses its self-will upon the soft sand, and spreads a way over a hundred yards of vague wetness and shallow shining.

The mild sun of April was glancing on this, and the tide just advancing to see to it, when the shadow of a slim figure fell on the stones before Sir Philip. So quietly had she slipped along, and appeared from the rocks so suddenly, that neither old man nor young maiden thought of the other until their eyes met.

"What, why, who?" cried the General, with something as much like a start as good conscience and long service had left in him: "who are you? Who are you, my dear?"

For his eyes were fixed on a fair young damsel of some fifteen summers, standing upright, with a pad on her head, and on the pad a red pitcher. Over her shoulders, and down to her waist, fell dark-brown curls abundantly, full of gleaming gold where the sun stole through the rocks to dwell in them. Her dress was nothing but blue Welsh flannel, gathered at the waist and tucked in front, and her beautifully tinted legs and azure-veined feet shone under it.

"Who are you, my pretty creature?" Sir Philip Bampfylde asked again, while she opened her grey eyes wide at him.

"Y Ferch o'r Scer, Syr," she answered shyly, and with the strong guttural tone which she knew was unpleasant to English ears. For it was her sensitive point that she could not tell any one who she was;

and her pride (which was manifold) always led her to draw back from questions.

On the other hand the old man's gaze of strong surprise and deep interest faded into mere admiration at the sound of our fine language.

"Fair young Cambrian, I have asked you rudely, and you are displeased with me. Lift your curls, my little dear, and let me see your face a while. I remember one just like it. There, you are put out again! So it was with the one I mean, when anything happened hastily."

The beautiful girl flung back her hair, and knelt to stoop her pitcher in the gurgling runnel; and then she looked at his silver locks, and was sorry for her impatience.

"Sir, I beg you to forgive me, if I have been rude to you. I am the maid from the old house yonder. I am often sent for this water, because it sparkles much more than our own does. If you please, I must go home, sir."

She filled the red pitcher, and tucked the blue skirt, as girls alone can manage it; and Sir Philip Bampfylde sighed at thinking of his age and loneliness, while with an old-fashioned gentleman's grace he lifted the pitcher and asked no more upon whose head he laid it.

CHAPTER LVIII.

MORE HASTE, LESS SPEED.

To do what is thoroughly becoming and graceful is my main desire. That any man should praise himself, and insist upon his own exploits and services to his native land, or even should let people guess at his valour, by any manner of side-wind,—such a course would simply deprive me of the only thing a poor battered sailor has left to support him against his pension; I mean of course humble, but nevertheless well-grounded, self-respect.

This delicacy alone forbids me even to allude to that urgent and universal call for my very humble services which launched me on the briny waves once more, and in time for a share in the glorious battle fought off Cape St Vincent. Upon that great St Valentine's Day of 1797, I was Master of the Excellent, under Captain Collingwood; and every boy in the parish knows how we captured the Saint Isidore,

and really took the Saint Nicholas, though other people got the credit, and nearly took a four-decked ship of 130 guns, whose name was the Saint Miss Trinder, and who managed to sneak away, when by all rights we had got her.

However, let us be content with things beyond contradiction; the foremost of which is, that no ship ever was carried into action in a more masterly style than the Excellent upon that occasion. And the weight of this falls on the Master, far more than the Captain, I do assure you. So highly were my skill and coolness commended in the despatches, that if I could have borne to be reduced below inferior men, I might have died a real Captain in the British Navy. For (as happened to the now Captain Bowen, when Master of the Queen Charlotte) I was offered a lieutenant's commission, and doubted about accepting it. Had I been twenty years younger, of course, I must have jumped at the offer; but at my time of life, and with all my knowledge, it would have been too painful to be ordered about by some young dancer; therefore I declined; at the same time thinking it fair to suggest, for the sake of the many true Britons now dependent upon me, that a small pecuniary remittance would meet with my consideration. That faculty of mine, however, was not called to the encounter: I

never heard more about it, and had to be satisfied with glory.

But if a man is undervalued often, and puts up with it, he generally finds that fortune treats him with respect in other more serious aspects. For instance, what would have happened if Providence had ordained to send me into either of those sad mutinies which disgraced our fleets so terribly? That deep respect for authority which (like the yolk of a nest-egg) lies calmly inside me, waiting to be sate upon; as well as my inborn sense of Nature's resistless determination to end by turning me into a gentleman (indications of which must have long ago been perceived by every reader), not to mention any common sense of duty in the abstract and wages in the pocket,—these considerations must have led me to lay a pistol to the head of almost every man I could find.

However, from such a course of action grace and mercy preserved me: and perhaps it was quite as well. For I am not sure that I could have stopped any one of the four mutinies entirely; although I can answer for it, that never would bad manners take the lead in any ship, while I was Master. It is the shilly-shallying that produces all the mischief. If all our Captains had behaved like Captain Peard and his

first lieutenant, in the St George off Cadiz, at the first spread of disaffection, it is my opinion that a great disgrace and danger would have been crushed in the bud. But what could be expected when our Government showed the like weakness? Twice they went hankering after peace, and even sent ambassadors! Who can ram shot home with pleasure while things of this kind are encouraged? To fight it out is the true Christianity, ordered by the Church itself.

And this we did, and are doing still, as Roger Berkrolles prophesied; and the only regret I have about it is, that a stiffness in my knees enables the other boarders to take a mean advantage of their youth, and jump into the chains or port-holes of a ship (when by my tactics conquered), so as to get a false lead of me. However, no small consolation was to be gained by reflecting how much more prize-money would accrue to me than to any of these forward fellows, so that one might with an unmoved leg contemplate their precipitancy.

Even a sorer grievance was the breaking up and dispersion of our noble and gallant ship's company, so long accustomed to one another and to sharp discipline in the Defence. Where was Captain Bampfylde? Where was Lieutenant Rodney Bluett? What was become of our three fine savages? Even Heaviside

and Hezekiah were in my thoughts continually, and out of my knowledge entirely. As to the latter worthy gunsmith, "Artillerist to the King and Queen, and all the Royal Family," I can only at present say that when I had been last at home, and before my acceptance of that brief appointment in the Plymouth dockyard—in short, when first I recovered strength, after that long illness, to cope with the walk both to and fro—I found occasion to go to Bridgend, with my uniform on for the sake of the town. I had not turned the corner of the bridge a good half-hour, before that important fact was known from the river-bank to the churchyard. And Griffith of the "Cat and Snuffers," set up such a Welsh hurrah [as good as the screech of a wild-cat trapped] that it went up the hill to Newcastle. In a word, Hepzibah heard of me, and ran down the hill, like a roaring lion, demanding her Hezekiah!

What ensued is painful to me even now to speak of. For though my conscience was refitting, and ready to knock about again, after carrying too much sail, I could not find it in my heart to give the mother of a rapid family nothing but lies to feed upon. Many men of noble nature dwell upon nothing but conscience; as if that were the one true compass for a man to steer by—whereas I never did find a man—outside

my own Sunday clothes,—whose conscience would not back him up in whatever he had a mind for.

My own had always worked like a power plainly exposed to every one; thereby gaining strength and revolving as fast as a mountain windmill, when the corn is falling away to chaff. This, however, was not required in the present instance; for Hepzibah (like a good woman) fell from one extreme into the opposite. From bitter reviling to praise and gratitude was but a turn of the tongue to her; especially when I happened to whisper into the ear of Griffith that the whole of my stipend for Newton Church clock would now, according to my views of justice, be handed to Hezekiah's wife, inasmuch as the worthy gunsmith had rejoined the Church of England. And I said what a dreadful blow this would be to all the Nicodemites, when the gun-officer returned with money enough to build a chapel: however, I felt that it served them right, because they had lately begun to sneer at his good wife's wonderful prophecies.

In a word, I had promised to find Hezekiah; and, both while in harbour and now when afloat, I tried to get tidings not only of him, but also of the Newton tailor, and Heaviside, and the three wild men, as well as young Harry Savage, Lieutenant Bluett, and Cap-

tain Bampfylde. For all of these being at sea and in war-time, who could say what had befallen them? Whereas I knew all about most of our people now living ashore in the middle of peace. However, of course one must expect old shipmates to be parted; and with all the vast force now afloat under the British flag, it would almost be a wonder if any of us should haul our wind within hailing distance of the others during our cruise in this world.

Nevertheless it did so happen, as I plainly will set forth, so far as I remember. Through the rest of the year '97 and the early part of the following year I was knocking about off and on near the Straits, being appointed to another ship while the Excellent was refitting, and afterwards to the Goliath, a fine 74, under Captain Foley.

In the month of May 1798, all our Mediterranean fleet, except three ships of the line, lay blockading Cadiz. Our Admiral, the Earl St Vincent, formerly Sir John Jervis, had orders also to watch Toulon, where a great fleet was assembling. And our information was so scant and contradictory, that our Admiral sent but three ships of the line and a frigate or two to see what those crafty Frenchmen might be up to. But this searching squadron had a commander whose name was Horatio Nelson.

This was not by any means the man to let frog-eaters do exactly as they pleased with us. "I believe in the King of England; I have faith in discipline; I abhor all Frenchmen worse than the very devil." Such was his creed; and at any moment he would give his life for it. It is something for a man to know what he means, and be able to put it clearly; and this alone fetches to his side more than half of the arguers who cannot make their minds up. But it is a much rarer gift, and not often combined with the other, for a man to enter into, and be able to follow up, ways and turns, and ins and outs, of the natures of all other men. If this is done by practised subtlety, it arouses hatred, and can get no further. But if it be a gift of nature exercised unwittingly, and with kind love of manliness, all who are worth bringing over are brought over by it.

If it were not hence, I know not whence it was that Nelson had such power over every man of us. To know what he meant, to pronounce it, and to perceive what others meant, these three powers enabled him to make all the rest mean what he did. At any rate such is my opinion; although I would not fly in the face of better scholars than myself, who declared that here was witchcraft. What else could account for the manner in which all Nelson's equals in rank

at once acknowledged him as the foremost, and felt no jealousy towards him? Even Admiral Earl St Vincent, great commander as he was, is said to have often deferred to the judgment of the younger officer. As for the men, they all looked upon it as worth a gold watch to sail under him.

Therefore we officers of the in-shore squadron, under Captain Troubridge, could scarcely keep our crews from the most tremendous and uproarious cheers when we got orders to make sail for the Mediterranean, and place ourselves under the command of Nelson. We could not allow any cheering, because the Dons ashore were not to know a word about our departure, lest they should inform the Crappos, under whose orders they now were acting. And a British cheer has such a ring over the waters of the sea, and leaps from wave to wave so, that I have heard it a league away when roused up well to windward. So our fine fellows had leave to cheer to their hearts' content when we got our offing; and partly under my conduct (for I led the way in the Goliath), nine seventy-fours got away to sea in the night of the 24th of May, and nine liners from England replaced them, without a single Jack Spaniard ever suspecting any movement. Every one knows what a time we had of it, after joining our Admiral;

how we dashed away helter-skelter, from one end of the world to the other almost, in a thorough wild-goose chase, because the Board of Admiralty, with their usual management, sent thirteen ships of the line especially on a searching scurry without one frigate to scout for them! We were obliged to sail, of course, within signalling distance of each other, and so that line of battle might be formed without delay, upon appearance of the enemy. For we now had a man whose signal was "Go at 'em when you see 'em." Also, as always comes to pass when the sons of Beelzebub are abroad, a thick haze lay both day and night upon the face of the water. So that, while sailing in close order, upon the night of the shortest day, we are said to have crossed the wake of the Frenchmen, almost ere it grew white again, without even sniffing their roasted frogs. Possibly this is true, in spite of all the great Nelson's vigilance; for I went to my hammock quite early that night, having suffered much from a hollow eye-tooth ever since I lost sight of poor Polly.

Admiral Nelson made no mistake. He had in the highest degree what is called in human nature "genius," and in dogs and horses "instinct." That is to say, he knew how to sniff out the road to almost anything. Trusting to this tenfold (when he found

that our Government would not hear of it, but was nearly certain of a mighty landing upon Ireland), off he set for Egypt, carrying on with every blessed sail that would or even would not draw. We came to that coast at a racing speed, and you should have seen his vexation when there was no French ship in the roadstead. "I have made a false cast, Troubridge," he cried; "I shall write to be superseded. My want of judgment may prove fatal to my King and country."

For our Government had sent him word, through the Earl St Vincent, that the great expedition from Toulon would sail for England or Ireland; and he at his peril had taken upon him to reject such nonsense. But now (as happens by Nature's justice to all very sanguine men) he was ready to smite the breast that had suggested pure truth to him. Thus being baffled we made all sail, and after a chase of six hundred leagues, and continually beating to windward, were forced to bear up on St Swithin's Day and make for the coast of Sicily. And it shows the value of good old hands, and thoroughly sound experience, that I, the oldest man perhaps in the fleet, could alone guide the fleet into Syracuse. Here our fierce excitement bubbled while we took in water.

CHAPTER LIX.

IN A ROCKY BOWER.

I NEVER hear of a man's impatience without sagely reflecting upon the rapid flight of time, when age draws on, and business thickens, and all the glory of this world must soon be left behind us. From the date of my great catch of fish and landing of Bardie at Pool Tavan, to the day of my guiding the British fleet betwixt the shoals of Syracuse, more than sixteen years had passed, and scarce left time to count them.

Therefore it was but a natural thing that the two little maidens with whom I began should now be grown up, and creating a stir in the minds of young men of the neighbourhood. Early in this present month of July, that north-west breeze, which was baffling our fleet off the coast of Anatolia, was playing among the rocks of Sker with the curls and skirts and ribbons of these two fair young damsels.

Or rather with the ribbons of one, for Bunny alone wore streamers, wherein her heart delighted; while the maid of Sker was dressed as plainly as if she had been her servant. Not that her inborn love of brightness ever had abandoned her, but that her vanities were put down quite arrogantly by Master Berkrolles whenever she came back from Candleston; and but for her lessons in music there—which were beyond Roger's compass—he would have raised his voice against her visits to the good Colonel.

For the old man's heart was entirely fixed upon the graceful maiden, and his chief anxiety was to keep her out of the way of harm. He knew that the Colonel loved nothing better (as behoved his lineage) than true and free hospitality; and he feared that the simple and nameless girl might set her affections on some grand guest, who would scorn her derelict origin.

Now she led Bunny into a cave, or rather a snug little cove of rock, which she always called her cradle, and where she had spent many lonely hours, in singing pure Welsh melodies of the sweetest sadness, feeling a love of the desert places from her own desertion. Then down she sate in her chair of stone, with limpets and barnacles studding it; while Bunny in the established manner bounced down on a pebble and gazed at her.

My son's daughter was a solid girl, very well built as our family is, and raking most handsomely fore and aft. Her fine black eyes, and abiding colour, and the modesty inherited from her grandfather, and some reflection perhaps of his fame, made her a favourite everywhere. And any grandfather might well have been proud to see how she carried her dress off.

The younger maid sate right above her, quite as if Nature had ordered it so ; and drew her skirt of home-spun camlet over her dainty feet, because the place was wet and chilly. And anybody looking must have said that she was born to grace. The clear outlines of oval face and delicate strength of forehead were moulded as by Nature only can such dainty work be done. Gentle pride and quiet moods of lonely meditation had deepened and subdued the radiance of the large grey eyes, and changed the dancing mirth of childhood into soft intelligence. And it must have been a fine affair, with the sunshine glancing on the breezy sea, to take a look at the lights and shadows of so clear a countenance.

Bunny, like a frigate riding, doused her head and all her outworks forward of the bends ; and then hung fluttering and doubtful, just as if she had missed stays.

" It is not your engagement, my dear Bunny," began

Delushy, as if she were ten years the senior officer; "you must not suppose for a moment that I object to your engagement. It is time, of course, for you to think, among so many suitors, of some one to put up with, especially after what you told me about having toothache. And Watkin is thoroughly good and kind, and able to read quite respectably. But what I blame you for is this, that you have not been straightforward, Bunny. Why have you kept me in the dark about this one of your many 'sweetheartings,' as you always call them?"

"And for sure, miss, then I never did no such thing; unless it was that I thought you was wanting him."

"I! You surely cannot have thought it! I want Watkin Thomas!"

"Well, miss, you need not fly out like that. All the girls in Newton was after him. And if it wasn't you as wanted him, it might be him as wanted you, which comes to the same thing always."

"I don't quite think that it does, dear Bunny, though you may have made it do so. Now look up and kiss me, dear: you know that I love you very much, though I have a way of saying things. And then I am longing to beg pardon when I have vexed any one. It comes of my 'noble birth,' I suppose,

which the girls of Newton laugh about. How I wish that I were but the child of the poorest good man in the parish! But now I am tired of thinking of it. What good ever comes of it? And what can one poor atom matter?"

"You are not a poor atom; you are the best, and the cleverest, and most learnedest, and most beautifullest lady as ever was seen in the whole of the land."

After or rather in the middle of which words, our Bunny, with her usual vigour and true national ardour, leaped into the arms of Delushy, so that they had a good cry together. "You will wait, of course, for your Granny to come, before you settle anything."

"Will I, indeed?" cried that wicked Bunny, and lucky for her that I was not there: "I shall do nothing of the sort. If he chooses to be always away at sea, conquering the French for ever, and never coming home when he can help it, he must make up his mind to be surprised when he happens to come home again. For sure then, that is right enough."

"Well, it does seem almost reasonable," answered the young lady: "and I think sometimes that we have no right to expect so much as that of things. It is not what they often do; and so they lose the habit of it."

"I do not quite understand," said Bunny.

"And I don't half understand," said Bardie:—"but —oh my dear, what shall I do? He is coming this way, I am sure. And I would not have you know anything of it—and of course you must feel that it is all nonsense. And I did not mean any harm about 'courting;' only you ought to be out of the way, and yet at the same time in it."

Our Bunny was such a slow-witted girl, and at the same time so particular (inheriting slowness from her good mother, and conscience from third generation), that really she could make no hand at meeting such a crisis. For now she began to perceive gold-lace, which alone discomfits the woman-race, and sets their minds going upon what they love. And so she did very little else but stare.

"I did think you would have helped me, Bunny," Delushy cried, with aggrievement. "I wanted to hear your own affairs, of course; but I would not have brought you here——"

"Young ladies, well met!" cried as solid a voice as the chops of the Channel had ever tautened: "I knew that you were here, and so I came down to look after you."

"Sure then, sir, and I do think that it is very kind of you. We was just awanting looking after. Oh what a fish I do see in that pool! Please only you

now both to keep back. I shall be back again, now just, sir." With these words away flew Bunny, as if her life were set on it.

"What a fine creature, to be sure!" said Commander Bluett, thoughtfully; "she reminds me so much of her grandfather. There is something so strongly alike between them, in their reckless outspoken honour, as well as in the turn of the nose they have."

"Let us follow, and admire her a little more," cried Delushy: "she deserves it, as you say; and perhaps—well perhaps she likes it."

Young Rodney looked at her a little while, and then at the ground a little while; because he was a stupid fellow as concerns young women. He thought this one such a perfect wonder, as may well be said of all of them. Then those two fenced about a little, out of shot of each other's eyes.

There was no doubt between them as to the meaning of each other. But they both seemed to think it wise to have a little bit of vexing before doing any more. And thus they looked at one another as if there was nothing between them. And all the time, how they were longing!

"I must have yes or no:" for Rodney could not outlast the young lady: "yes or no; you know what

I mean. I am almost always at sea; and to-morrow I start to join Nelson. With him there is no play-work. I hope to satisfy him, though I know what he is to satisfy. But I hope to do it."

"Of course you will," Delushy answered. "You seem to give great satisfaction; almost everywhere, I am sure."

"Do I give it, you proud creature, where I long to give it most?"

"How can I pretend to say, without being told in what latitude even—as I think your expression is—this amiable desire lies?"

"As if you did not know, Delushy!"

"As if I did know, Captain Bluett! And another thing—I am not to be called 'Delushy,' much, in that way."

"Very well, then; much in another way. Delushy, Delushy, delicious Delushy, what makes you so unkind to me? To-morrow I go away, and perhaps we shall never meet again, Delushy: and then how you would reproach yourself. Don't you think you would now?"

"When never and then come together—yes. I suppose all sailors talk so."

"If I cannot even talk to please you, there is nothing more to say. I think that the bards have

turned your head with their harpings, and their fiddle-strings, and ballads (in very bad Welsh, no doubt) about 'the charming maid of Sker;' and so on. When you are old enough to know better, and the young conceit wears out of you, you may be sorry, Miss Andalusia, for your wonderful cleverness."

He made her a bow with his handsome hat, and her warm young heart was chilled by it. Surely he ought to have shaken hands. She tried to keep her own meaning at home, and bid him farewell with a curtsy, while he tried not to look back again; but fortune or nature was too much for them, and their eyes met wistfully.

These things are out of my line so much, that I cannot pretend to say now for a moment what these very young people did; and everybody else having done the same, with more or less unwisdom, according to constitution, may admire the power of charity which restrains me from describing them. My favourite writer of Scripture is St Paul, who was afraid of nobody, and who spent his time in making sails when the thorn in the flesh permitted him. And this great writer describes the quick manners of maidens far better than I can. Wherefore I keep myself up aloft until they have had a good spell of it.

"I have no opinion, now. What can you expect of me? Rodney, I must stop and think for nearly a quarter of a century before I have an opinion."

"Then stay, just so; and let me admire you, till I have to swim with you."

"Rodney, you are reckless. Here comes the tide; and you know I have got my very best Candleston side-lace boots on!"

"Then come out of this rocky bower, which suits your fate so, darling; and let us talk most sensibly."

"By all means; if you think we can. There, you need not touch me, Rodney;—I can get out very well indeed. I know these rocks better than you do perhaps. Now sit on this rock where old David first hooked me, as I have heard that old chatterbox tell fifty times, as if he had done some great great thing."

"He did indeed a grand grand thing. No wonder that he is proud of it. And he has so much to be proud of that you may take it for your highest compliment. Perhaps there is no other man in the Service—or I might say in all the civilised world——" But it hurts me to tell what this excellent officer said or even thought of me. He was such a first-rate judge by this time that I must leave his opinion blank.

Over the sea they began to look, in a discontented

quietude; as the manner of young mortals is before they begin to know better, and with great ideas moving them. Bunny, with the very kindest discretion, had run away entirely, and might now be seen at the far end of the sands, and springing up the rocks, on her way to Newton. So those two sate side by side, with their hearts full of one another, and their minds made up to face the world together, whatever might come of it. For as yet they could see nothing clearly through the warm haze of loving, being wrapped up in an atmosphere which generally leads to a hurricane. But to them, for a few short minutes, earth and sea and sky were all one universal heaven.

"It will not do," cried the maid of Sker, suddenly awaking with a short deep sigh, and drawing back her delicate hand from the broad palm of young Rodney: "it will never, never do. We must both be mad to think of it."

"Who could fail to be mad," he answered, "if you set the example?"

"Now, don't be so dreadfully stupid, Rodney. What I say is most serious. Of course you know the world better than I do, as you told me yesterday, after sailing a dozen times round it. But I am thinking of other things. Not of what the world will say,

but of what I myself must feel. And the first of these things is that I cannot be cruelly ungrateful. It would be the deepest ingratitude to the Colonel if I went on with it."

"Went on with it! What a way to speak! As if you could be off with it when you pleased! And my good uncle loves you like his own daughter; and so does my mother. Now what can you mean?"

"As if you did not know indeed! Now, Rodney, do talk sensibly. I ought to know, if any one does, what your uncle and your mother are. And I know that they would rather see your death in the Gazette than your marriage with an unknown, nameless nobody like me, sir."

"Well, of course, we must take the chance of that," said Captain Bluett, carelessly. "The Colonel is the best soul in the world, and my dear mother a most excellent creature, whenever she listens to reason. But as to my asking their permission—it is the last thing I should dream of. I am old enough to know my own mind, and to get my own living, I should hope, as well as that of my family. And if I am only in time with Nelson, of course we shall do wonders."

For a minute or two the poor young maid had not a word to say to him. She longed to throw her arms

around him, when he spoke so proudly, and to indulge her own pride in him, as against all the world beside. But having been brought up in so much trouble, she had learned to check herself. So that she did nothing more than wait for him to go on again. And this he did with sparkling eyes and the confidence of a young British tar.

"There is another thing, my beauty, which they are bound to consider, as well as all the prize-money I shall earn. And that is, that they have nobody except themselves to thank for it. They must have known what was sure to happen, if they chose to have you there whenever I was home from sea. And my mother is so clever too—to my mind it is plain enough that they meant me to do what I have done."

"And pray what is that?"

"As if you did not know! Come now, you must pay the penalty of asking for a compliment. Talk about breeding and good birth, and that stuff! Why, look at your hands and then look at mine. Put your fingers between mine—both hands, both hands—that's the way. Now just feel my great clumsy things, and then see how lovely yours are—as clear as wax-tapers, and just touched with rose, and every nail with a fairy gift, and pointed like an almond.

A 'nameless nobody' indeed! What nameless nobody ever had such nails? By way of contrast examine mine."

"Oh but you bite yours shockingly, Rodney. I am sure that you do, though I never saw you. You must be cured of that dreadful trick."

"That shall be your first job, Delushy, when you are Mrs Rodney. Now for another great sign of birth. Do you see any peak to my upper lip?"

"No, I can't say I do. But how foolish you are! I ought to be crying, and you make me laugh!"

"Then just let me show you the peak to yours. Honour bright—and no mean advantages—that is to say if I can help it. Oh, here's that blessed Moxy coming! May the Frenchmen rob her henroost! Now just one promise, darling, darling; just one little promise. To-morrow I go to most desperate battles, and lucky to come home with one arm and one leg. Therefore, promise a solemn promise to have no one in the world but me."

"I think," said the maid, with her lips to his ear, in the true old coaxing fashion, "that I may very well promise that. But I will promise another thing too. And that is, not to have even you, until your dear mother and good uncle come to me and ask me. And that can never never be."

CHAPTER LX.

NELSON AND THE NILE.

THE first day of August in the year of our Lord 1798 is a day to be long remembered by every Briton with a piece of constitution in him. For on that day our glorious navy, under the immortal Nelson, administered to the Frenchmen, under Admiral Brewer, as pure and perfect a lathering as is to be found in all history. This I never should venture to put upon my own authority (especially after the prominent part assigned therein by Providence to a humble individual who came from Newton-Nottage), for with history I have no patience at all, because it always contradicts the very things I have seen and known: but I am bound to believe a man of such high principles and deep reading as Master Roger Berkrolles. And he tells me that I have helped to produce the greatest of all great victories.

Be that one way or the other, I can tell you every word concerning how we managed it; and you need not for one moment think me capable of prejudice. Quite the contrary, I assure you. There could not have been in the British fleet any man more determined to do justice to all Crappos, than a thoroughly ancient navigator, now Master of the Goliath.

We knew exactly what to do, every Captain, every Master, every quarter-master; even the powder-monkeys had their proper work laid out for them. The spirit of Nelson ran through us all; and our hearts caught fire from his heart. From the moment of our first glimpse at the Frenchmen spread out in that tempting manner, beautifully moored and riding in a long line head and stern, every old seaman among us began to count on his fingers prize-money. They thought that we would not fight that night, for the sun was low when we found them; and with their perpetual conceit, they were hard at work taking water in. I shall never forget how beautiful these ships looked, and how peaceful. A French ship always sits the water with an elegant quickness, like a Frenchwoman at the looking-glass. And though we brought the evening breeze in very briskly with us, there was hardly swell enough in the bay to make them play their hawsers. Many fine things have I

seen, and therefore know pretty well how to look at them, which a man never can do upon the first or even the second occasion. But it was worth any man's while to live to the age of threescore years and eight, with a sound mind in a sound body, and eyes almost as good as ever, if there were nothing for it more than to see what I saw at this moment. Six-and-twenty ships of the line, thirteen bearing the tricolor, and riding cleared for action, the other thirteen with the red cross flying, the cross of St George on the ground of white, and tossing the blue water from their stems under pressure of canvass. Onward rushed our British ships, as if every one of them was alive, and driven out of all patience by the wicked escapes of the enemy. Twelve hundred leagues of chase had they cost us, ingratitude towards God every night, and love of the devil at morning, with dread of our country for ever prevailing, and mistrust of our own good selves. And now at last we had got them tight; and mean we did to keep them. Captain Foley came up to me as I stood on the ratlines to hear the report of the men in the starboard fore-chains; and his fine open face was clouded. "Master," he said, "how much more of this? Damn your soundings. Can't you see that the Zealous is drawing ahead of us? Hood has no-

body in the chains. If you can't take the ship into action, I will. Stand by there to set top-gallant-sails."

These had been taken in, scarce five minutes agone, as prudence demanded, for none of us had any chart of the bay; and even I knew little about it, except that there was a great shoal of rock betwixt Aboukir island and the van ship of the enemy. And but for my warning, we might have followed the two French brigs appointed to decoy us in that direction. Now, having filled top-gallant-sails, we rapidly headed our rival the Zealous, in spite of all that she could do; and we had the honour of receiving the first shot of the enemy. For now we were rushing in, stem on, having formed line of battle, towards the van of the anchored Frenchmen.

Now as to what followed, and the brilliant idea which occurred to somebody to turn the enemy's line and take them on the larboard or inner side (on which they were quite unprepared for attack) no two authorities are quite agreed, simply because they all are wrong. Some attribute this grand manœuvre to our great Admiral Nelson, others to Captain Hood of the Zealous, and others to our Captain Foley. This latter is nearest the mark; but from whom did Captain Foley obtain the hint? Modesty forbids

me to say what Welshman it was who devised this noble and most decisive stratagem, while patriotic duty compels me to say that it was a Welshman, and more than that a Glamorganshire man, born in a favoured part of the quiet village of N— N—. Enough, unless I add that internal evidence will convince any unprejudiced person that none but an ancient fisherman, and thorough-going long-shoreman, could by any possibility have smelled out his way so cleverly.

Our great Admiral saw, with his usual insight into Frenchmen, that if they remained at anchor we were sure to man their capstans. For Crappos fight well enough with a rush, but unsteadily when at a stand-still, and worst of all when taken by surprise and outmanœuvred. And the manner in which the British fleet advanced was enough to strike them cold by its majesty and its awfulness. For in perfect silence we were gliding over the dark-blue sea, with the stately height of the white sails shining, and the sky behind us full of solemn yellow sunset. Even we, so sure of conquest, and so nerved with stern delight, could not gaze on the things around us, and the work before us, without for a moment wondering whether the Lord in heaven looked down at us.

At any rate we obeyed to the letter the orders both of our Admiral and of a man scarcely less remarkable. "Let not the sun go down on your wrath," are the very words of St Paul, I believe; and we never fired a shot until there was no sun left to look at it. I stood by the men at the wheel myself, and laid my own hand to it: for it was a matter of very fine steerage, to run in ahead of the French line, ware soundings, and then bear up on their larboard bow, to deliver a thorough good raking broadside. I remember looking over my left shoulder after we bore up our helm a-weather, while crossing the bows of the Carrier (as the foremost enemy's ship was called), and there was the last limb of the sun like the hoof of a horse disappearing. And my own head nearly went with it, as the wind of a round-shot knocked me over. "Bear up, bear up, lads," cried Captain Foley, "our time has come at last, my boys. Well done Llewellyn! A finer sample of conning and steerage was never seen. Let go the best bower. Pass the word. Ready at quarters all of you. Now she bears clear fore and aft. Damn their eyes, let them have it."

Out rang the whole of our larboard battery, almost like a single gun; a finer thing was never seen; and before the ring passed into a roar, the yell of French-

men came through the smoke. Masts and spars flew right and left with the bones of men among them, and the sea began to hiss and heave, and the ships to reel and tremble, and the roar of a mad volcano rose, and nothing kept either shape or tenor, except the faces of brave men.

Every ship in our fleet was prepared to anchor by the stern, so as to spring our broadsides aright; but the anchor of the Goliath did not bite so soon as it should have done, so that we ran past the Carrier, and brought up on the larboard quarter of the second French 74, with a frigate and a brig of war to employ a few of our starboard guns. By this time the rapid darkness fell, and we fought by the light of our own guns. And now the skill of our Admiral and his great ideas were manifest, for every French ship had two English upon it, and some of them even three at a time. In a word, we began with the head of their line, and crushed it, and so on joint by joint, ere even the centre and much more the tail could fetch their way up to take part in it. Our antagonist was the first that struck, being the second of the Frenchman's line, and by name the Conquer-ant. But she found in Captain Foley and David Llewellyn an ant a little too clever to conquer. We were a good deal knocked about, with most of our main

rigging shot away, and all our masts heavily wounded. Nevertheless we drew ahead, to double upon the third French ship, of the wonderful name of Sparticipate.

From this ship I received a shot, which, but for the mercy of the Lord, must have made a perfect end of me. That my end may be perfect has long been my wish, and the tenor of my life leads up to it. Nevertheless, who am I to deny that I was not ready for the final finish at that very moment? And now, at this time of writing, I find myself ready to wait a bit longer. What I mean was a chain-shot sailing along, rather slowly as they always do; and yet so fast that I could not either duck or jump at sight of it, although there was light enough now for anything, with the French Admiral on fire. Happening to be well satisfied with my state of mind at that moment (not from congratulation, so much as from my inside conscience), I now was beginning to fill a pipe, and to dwell upon further manœuvres. For one of the foremost points of all, after thoroughly drubbing the enemy, is to keep a fine self-control, and be ready to go on with it.

No sooner had I filled this pipe, and taken a piece of wadding to light it, which was burning handy (in spite of all my orders), than away went a piece of me; and down went I, as dead as a Dutch herring.

At least so everybody thought, who had time to think about it; and "the Master's dead" ran along the deck, so far as time was to tell of it. I must have lain numb for an hour, I doubt, with the roar of the guns, and the shaking of bulk-heads, like a shiver, jarring me, and a pool of blood curdling into me, and another poor fellow cast into the scuppers and clutching at me in his groaning, when the heavens took fire in one red blaze, and a thundering roar, that might rouse the dead, drowned all the rolling battle-din. I saw the white looks of our crew all aghast, and their bodies scared out of death's manufacture, by this triumph of mortality; and the elbows of big fellows holding the linstock fell quivering back to their shaken ribs. For the whole sky was blotched with the corpses of men, like the stones of a crater cast upwards; and the sheet of the fire behind them showed their knees, and their bellies, and streaming hair. Then with a hiss, like electric hail, from a mile's height all came down again, corpses first (being softer things), and timbers next, and then the great spars that had streaked the sky like rockets.

The violence of this matter so attracted my attention that I was enabled to rally my wits, and lean on one elbow and look at it. And I do assure you that anybody who happened to be out of sight of it, lost

a finer chance than ever he can have another prospect of. For a hundred-and-twenty-gun ship had blown up, with an Admiral and Rear-Admiral, not to mention a Commodore, and at least 700 complement. And when the concussion was over, there fell the silence of death upon all men. Not a gun was fired, nor an order given, except to man the boats in hopes of saving some poor fellows.

CHAPTER LXI.

A SAVAGE DEED.

NEVERTHELESS our Britons were forced to renew the battle afterwards; because those Frenchmen had not the manners to surrender as they should have done. And they even compelled us to batter their ships so seriously and sadly, that when we took possession some were scarcely worth the trouble. To make us blow up their poor Admiral was a distressing thing to begin with; but when that was done, to go on with the battle was as bad as the dog in the manger. What good could it do them to rob a poor British sailor of half his prize-money? And such conduct becomes at least twice as ungenerous when they actually have wounded him!

My wound was sore, and so was I, on the following day, I can tell you; for not being now such a very young man, I found it a precious hard thing to renew the power of blood that was gone from me. And

after the terrible scene that awoke me from the first trance of carnage, I was thrown by the mercy of Providence into pure insensibility. This I am bound to declare; because the public might otherwise think itself wronged, and perhaps even vote me down as of no value, for failing to give them the end of this battle so brilliantly as the beginning. I defy my old rival, the Newton tailor (although a much younger man perhaps than myself, and with my help a pretty good seaman), to take up the tucks of this battle as well as I have done,—though not well done. Even if a tailor can come up and fight (which he did, for the honour of Cambria), none of his customers can expect any more than French-chalk flourishes when a piece of description is down in his books. However, let him cut his cloth. He is still at sea, or else under it; and if he ever does come home, and sit down to his shop-board—as his wife says he is sure to do—his very first order shall be for a church-going coat, with a doubled-up sleeve to it.

For the Frenchmen took my left arm away in a thoroughly lubberly manner. If they had done it with a good cross-cut, like my old wound of forty years' standing, I would at once have set it down to the credit of their nation. But when I came to dwell over the subject (as for weeks my duty was),

more and more clear to me it became, that instead of honour they had now incurred a lasting national disgrace. The fellows who charged that gun had been afraid of the recoil of it. Half a charge of powder makes the vilest fracture to deal with—however, there I was by the heels, and now for nobler people. Only while my wound is green you must not be too hard on me.

The Goliath was ordered to chase down the bay, on the morning after the battle, together with the Theseus and a frigate called the Leader. This frigate was commanded by the Honourable Rodney Bluett, now a post-captain, and who had done wonders in the height of last night's combat. He had brought up in the most brazen-faced manner, without any sense of his metal, close below the starboard bow of the great three-decker Orient and the quarter of the Franklin, and thence he fired away at both, while all their shot flew over him. And this was afterwards said to have been the cleverest thing done by all of us, except the fine helm and calm handling of H.M. ship Goliath.

The two ships, in chase of which we were despatched, ran ashore and surrendered, as I was told afterwards (for of course I was down in my berth at the time, with the surgeon looking after me); and

thus out of thirteen French sail of the line, we took or destroyed eleven. And as we bore up after taking possession, the Leader ran under our counter and hailed us, "Have you a Justice of the Peace on board?" Our Captain replied that he was himself a member of the quorum, but could not attend to such business now as making of wills and so on. Hereupon Captain Bluett came forward, and with a polite wave of his hat called out that Captain Foley would lay him under a special obligation, as well as clear the honour of a gallant naval officer, by coming on board of the Leader, to receive the deposition of a dying man. In ten minutes' time our good skipper stood in the cockpit of the Leader, while Captain Bluett wrote down the confession of a desperately-wounded seaman, who was clearing his conscience of perilous wrong before he should face his Creator. The poor fellow sate on a pallet propped up by the bulkhead and a pillow; that is to say, if a man can sit who has no legs left him. A round shot had caught him in the tuck of both thighs, and the surgeon could now do no more for him. Indeed he was only enabled to speak, or to gasp out his last syllables, by gulps of raw brandy which he was taking, with great draughts of water between them. On the other side of his dying bed stood Cannibals Dick and Joe, howl-

ing, and nodding their heads from time to time, whenever he lifted his glazing eyes to them for confirmation. For it was my honest and highly-respected friend, the poor Jack Wildman, who now lay in this sad condition, upon the very brink of another world. And I cannot do better than give his own words, as put into shape by two clear-witted men, Captains Foley and Rodney Bluett. Only for the reader's sake I omit a great deal of groaning.

"*This is the solemn and dying delivery* of me, known as 'Jack Wildman,' A.B. seaman of H.M. frigate Leader, now off the coast of Egypt, and dying through a hurt in battle with the Frenchmen. I cannot tell my name, or age, or where I was born, or anything about myself; and it does not matter, as I have nothing to leave behind me. Dick and Joe are to have my clothes, and my pay if there is any; and the woman that used to be my wife is to have my medals for good behaviour in the three battles I have partaken of. My money would be no good to her, because they never use it; but the women are fond of ornaments.

"I was one of a race of naked people, living in holes of the earth at a place we did not know the name of. I now know that it was Nympton in Devonshire, which is in England, they tell me. No

one had any right to come near us, except the great man who had given us land, and defended us from all enemies.

"His name was Parson Chouane, I believe, but I do not know how to spell it. He never told us of a thing like God; but I heard of it every day in the navy whenever my betters were angry. Also I learned to read wonderful writings; but I can speak the truth all the same.

"Ever since I began to be put into clothes, and taught to kill other people, I have longed to tell of an evil thing which happened once among us. How long ago I cannot tell, for we never count time as you do, but it must have been many years back, for I had no hair on my body except my head. We had a man then who took lead among us, so far as there was any lead; and I think that he thought himself my father, because he gave me the most victuals. At any rate we had no other man to come near him in any cunningness. Our master Chouane came down sometimes, and took a pride in watching him, and liked him so much that he laughed at him, which he never did to the rest of us.

"This man, my father as I may call him, took me all over the great brown moors one night in some very hot weather. In the morning we came to a

great heap of houses, and hid in a copse till the evening. At dusk we set out again, and came to a great and rich house by the side of a river. The lower portholes seemed full of lights, and on the flat place in front of them a band of music—such as now I love —was playing, and people were dancing. I had never heard such a thing before ; and my father had all he could do to keep me in the black trees out of sight of them. And among the thick of the going about we saw our master Chouane in his hunting-dress.

"This must have been what great people call a 'masked ball,' I am sure of it ; since I saw one, when, in the Bellona, there were many women somewhere. But at the end of the great light place, looking out over the water, there was a quiet shady place for tired people to rest a bit. When the whole of the music was crashing like a battle, and people going round like great flies in a web, my father led me down by the river-side, and sent me up some dark narrow steps, and pointed to two little babies. The whole of the business was all about these, and the festival was to make much of them. The nurse for a moment had set them upright, while she just spoke to a young sailor-man ; and crawling, as all of us can, I brought down these two babies to my father ; and one was heavy, and the other light.

"My father had scarcely got hold of them, and the nurse had not yet missed them, when on the dark shore by the river-side, perhaps five fathoms under the gaiety, Parson Chouane came up to my father, and whispered, and gave orders. I know not what they said, for I had no sense of tongues then, nor desired it; for we knew what we wanted by signs, and sounds, and saved a world of trouble so. Only I thought that our master was angry at having the girl-child brought away. He wanted only the boy perhaps, who was sleepy and knew nothing. But the girl-child shook her hand at him, and said, 'E bad man, Bardie knows 'a.'

"I—every one of us—was amazed—so very small —— Oh, sir, I can tell you no more, I think."

"Indeed then, but you must, my friend," cried Captain Foley, with spirit enough to set a dead man talking; "finish this story, you thief of the world, before you cheat the hangman. Two lovely childer stolen away from a first-rate family to give a ball of that kind—and devil a bit you repent of it!"

Poor dying Jack looked up at him, and then at the place where his legs should have been, and he seemed ashamed for the want of them. Then he played with the sheet for a twitch or two, as if proud of his arms still remaining; and checked back the agony

tempting him now to bite it with his great white teeth.

"Ask the rest of us, Captain," he said; "Joe, you know it; Dick, you know it, now that I am telling you. The boy was brought up with us, and you call him Harry Savage. I knew the great house when I saw it again. And I longed to tell the good old man there; but for the sake of our people. Chouane would have destroyed them all. I was tempted after they pelted me so, and the old man was so good to me; but something always stopped me, and I wanted poor Harry to go to Heaven—— Oh, a little drink of water!"

Captain Foley was partly inclined to take a great deal of poor Jack's confession for no more than the raving of a light-headed man; but Rodney Bluett conjured him to take down every word of it. And when this young officer spoke of his former chief and well-known friend, now Commodore Sir Drake Bampfylde (being knighted for service in India), and how all his life he had lain under a cloud by reason of this very matter, not another word did our Captain need from him, but took up his pen again.

"I ought to have told," said the dying man slowly; "only I could not bring myself. But now you will know, you will all know now. My father is dead;

but Dick and Joe can swear that the boy is the baby. He had beautiful clothes on, they shone in the boat; but the girl-child had on no more than a smock, that they might see her dancing. Our master did not stay with us a minute, but pushed us all into a boat on the tide, cut the rope, and was back with the dancers. My father had learned just enough of a boat to keep her straight in the tideway, and I had to lie down over the babies, to keep their white clothes from notice. We went so fast that I was quite scared, having never been afloat before, so there must have been a strong ebb under us. And the boat, which was white, must have been a very light one, for she heeled with every motion. At last we came to a great broad water, which perhaps was the river's mouth, with the sea beyond it. My father got frightened perhaps; and I know that I had been frightened long ago. By a turn of the eddy, we scrambled ashore, and carried the boy-baby with us; but the boat broke away with a lurch as we jumped, for we had not the sense to bring out the rope. In half a minute she was off to sea, and the girl-baby lay fast asleep in her stern. And now after such a long voyage in the dark, we were scared so that we both ran for our lives, and were safe before daybreak at Nympton.

"My father before we got home stripped off the little boy's clothes, and buried them in a black moor-hole full of slime, with a great white stone in the midst of it. And the child himself was turned over naked to herd with the other children (for none of our women look after them), and nobody knew or cared to know who he was, or whence he came, except my poor father, and our master—and I myself, many years afterwards. But now I know well, and I cannot have quiet to die, without telling somebody. The boy-baby I was compelled to steal was Sir Philip Bampfylde's grandson, and the baby-girl his granddaughter. I never heard what became of her. She must have been drowned, or starved, most likely. But as for the boy, he kept up his life; and the man who took us most in hand, of the name of 'Father David,' gave the names to all of us, and the little one 'Harry Savage,' now serving on board of the Vanguard. I know nothing of the buried images found by Father David. My father had nothing to do with that. It may have been another of Chouane's plans. I know no more of anything. There, let me die, I have told all I know. I can write my nickname. I never had any other—*Jack Wildman.*"

At the end of this followed the proper things, and the forms the law is made of, with first of all the sign-

manual of our noble Captain Foley, who must have been an Irishman, to lead us into the battle of the Nile, while in the commission of the Peace. And after him Captain Bluett signed, and two or three warrant-officers gifted with a writing elbow; and then a pair of bare-bone crosses, meaning Cannibals Dick and Joe, who could not speak, and much less write, in the depth of their emotions.

CHAPTER LXII.

A RASH YOUNG CAPTAIN.

Now if I had been sewn up well in a hammock, and cast overboard (as the surgeon advised), who, I should like to know, would have been left capable of going to the bottom of these strange proceedings? Hezekiah was alive, of course, and prepared to swear to anything, especially after a round-shot must have killed him, but for his greasiness. And clever enough no doubt he was, and suspicious, and busy-minded, and expecting to have all Wales under his thumb, because he was somewhere about on the skirts of the great battle I led them into. But granting him skill, and that narrow knowledge of the world which I call "cunning;" granting him also a restless desire to get to the bottom of everything, and a sniffing sense like a turnspit-dog's, of the shank-end bone he is roasting,—none the more for all that could we grant him the downright power, now loudly called for, to put two and two together.

Happily for all parties, poor Hezekiah was not required to make any further fool of himself. The stump of my arm was in a fine condition when ordered home with the prizes; and as soon as I felt the old Bay of Biscay, over I knocked the doctor. He fitted me with a hook after this, in consistence with an old fisherman; and now I have such a whole boxful of tools to screw on, that they beat any hand I ever had in the world—if my neighbours would only not borrow them.

Tush—I am railing at myself again! Always running down, and holding up myself to ridicule, out of pure contrariety, just because every one else over-values me. There are better men in the world than myself; there are wiser; there are braver;—I will not be argued down about it—there are some (I am sure) as honest, in their way; and a few almost as truthful. However, I never yet did come across any other man half so modest. This I am forced to allude to now, in departure from my usual practice, because this quality and nothing else had prevented me from dwelling upon, and far more from following up, some shrewd thoughts which had occurred to me, loosely, I own, and in a random manner,—still they had occurred to me once or twice, and had been dismissed. Why so? Simply because I trusted other men's

judgment, and public impression, instead of my own superior instinct, and knowledge of weather and tideways.

How bitterly it repented me now of this ill-founded diffidence, when, as we lay in the Chops of the Channel about the end of October, with a nasty head-wind baffling us, Captain Rodney Bluett came on board of us from the Leader! He asked if the doctor could report the Master as strong enough to support an interview; whereupon our worthy bone-joiner laughed, and showed him into me where I sate at the latter end of a fine aitch-bone of beef. And then Captain Rodney produced his papers, and told me the whole of his story. I was deeply moved by Jack Wildman's death, though edified much by the manner of it, and some of his last observations. For a naked heathen to turn so soon into a trousered Christian, and still more a good fore-top-man, was an evidence of unusual grace, even under such doctrine as mine was. Captain Bluett spoke much of this, although his religious convictions were not by any means so intense as mine, while my sinews were under treatment; but even with only one arm and a quarter, I seemed to be better fitted to handle events than this young Captain was. His ability was of no common order, as he had proved by running his

frigate under the very chains of the thundering big Frenchman, so that they could not be down on him. And yet he could not see half the bearings of Jack Wildman's evidence. We had a long talk, with some hot rum-and-water, for the evenings already were chilly; and my natural candour carried me almost into too much of it. And the Honourable Rodney gazed with a flush of colour at me, when I gave him my opinions like a raking broadside.

"You may be right," he said; "you were always so wonderful at a long shot, Llewellyn. But really it does seem impossible."

"Captain," I answered; "how many things seem so, yet come to pass continually!"

"I cannot gainsay you, Llewellyn, after all my experience of the world. I would give my life to find it true. But how are we to establish it?"

"Leave me alone for that, Captain Bluett; if it can be done it shall be done. The idea is entirely my own, remember. It had never occurred to you, had it?"

"Certainly not," he replied, with his usual downright honesty; "my reason for coming to you with that poor fellow's dying testimony was chiefly to cheer you up with the proofs of our old Captain's innocence, and to show you the turn of luck for young Harry,

who has long been so shamefully treated. And now I have another thing to tell you about him ; that is if you have not heard it."

"No, I have heard nothing at all. I did not even know what had become of him, until you read Jack's confession. With Nelson, on board the Vanguard!"

"That was my doing," said the Honourable Rodney: "I recommended him to volunteer, and he was accepted immediately, with the character I gave him. But it is his own doing, and proud I am of it, that he is now junior lieutenant of Admiral Lord Nelson's own ship the Vanguard. Just before Nelson received his wound, and while powder was being handed up, there came a shell hissing among them, and hung with a sputtering fuse in the coil of a cable, and the men fell down to escape it. But young Harry with wonderful quickness leaped (as he did, to save me in San Domingo), and sent the fuse over the side with a dash. Then Nelson came up, for the firing was hot, and of course he must be in the thick of it, and he saw in a moment what Harry had done, and he took down his name for promotion, being just what himself would have loved to do. It will have to be confirmed, of course ; but of that there can be no question, after all that we have done ; and when it turns out who he is."

"I am heartily glad of it, Captain," I cried; "the boy was worthy of any rank. Worth goes a little way; birth a long way. But all these things have to be lawfully proven."

"Oh, you old village-lawyer; as we used to call you, at Old Newton. And you deserved it, you rogue, you did. You may have lost your left hand; but your right has not lost its cunning." He spoke in the purest play and jest; and with mutual esteem we parted. Only I stipulated for a good talk with him about our measures, when I should have determined them; or at the latest on reaching port.

The boldest counsel is often the best, and naturally recommends itself to a man of warlike character. My first opinion, especially during the indignant period, was that nothing could be wiser, or more spirited, or more striking, than to march straight up to Parson Chowne and confront him with all this evidence, taken down by a magistrate, and dare him to deny it; and then hale him off to prison, and (if the law permitted) hang him. That this was too good for him, every one who has read my words must acknowledge; the best thing, moreover, that could befall him; for his body was good, though his soul was bad; and he might have some hopes to redeem the latter at the expense of the former. And if he

had not, through life, looked forward to hanging as his latter end and salvation, it is quite impossible to account for the licence he allowed himself.

However, on second thoughts I perceived that the really weighty concern before us, and what we were bound to think first of, was to restore such a fine old family to its health and happiness. To reinstate, before he died, that noble and most kind-hearted man, full of religious feeling also, and of confidence that the Lord having made a good man would look after him—which is the very spirit of King David, when his self-respect returns—in a word, to replace in the world's esteem, and (what matters far more) in true family love, that fine and pure old gentleman, the much-troubled Sir Philip Bampfylde,—this, I say, was the very first duty of a fellow nursed by a general and a baronet through the small-pox; while it was also a feat well worthy of the master of a line-of-battle ship, which was not last in the battle of the Nile. And scarcely second even to this was the duty and joy of restoring to their proper rank in life two horribly injured and innocent creatures, one of whom was our own Bardie. Therefore, upon the whole, it seemed best to go to work very warily.

So it came to pass that I followed my usual practice of wholly forgetting myself; and receiving from

the Honourable Rodney Bluett that most important document, I sewed it up in the watered-silk bag with my caul and other muniments, and set out for Narnton Court, where I found both Polly, and the cook, and the other comforts. But nothing would do for our Captain Rodney—all young men are so inconsiderate—except to be off at racing speed for Candleston Court, and his sweetheart Delushy, and the excellent Colonel's old port wine. And as he was so brisk, I will take him first, with your good leave, if ever words of mine can keep up with him. But of course you will understand that I tell what came to my knowledge afterwards.

With all the speed of men and horses, young Rodney Bluett made off for home, and when he got there his luck was such as to find Delushy in the house. It happened to be her visiting-time, according to the old arrangement, and this crafty sailor found it out from the fine old woman at the lodge. So what did he do but discharge his carriage, and leave all his kit with her, and go on, with the spright foot of a mariner, to the ancient house which he knew so well. Then this tall and bold young Captain entered by the butler's door, the trick of which was well known to him, and in a room out of the lobby he stood, without his own mother knowing it.

It was the fall of autumnal night, when everything is so rich and mellow, when the waning daylight ebbs, like a great spring-tide exhausted, into the quickening flow of star-light. And the plates were being cleared away after a snug dinner-party.

The good Colonel sat at the head of his table, after the ladies' withdrawal, with that modest and graceful kindliness, which is the sure mark of true blood. Around him were a few choice old friends, such as only good men have; friends, who would scout the evidence of their own eyes against him. According to our fine old fashion, these were drinking healths all round, not with undue love of rare port, so much as with truth and sincerity.

Rodney made a sign to Crumpy (who had been shaking him by both hands, until the tears prevented him), just to please to keep all quiet touching his arrival; and to let him have a slice or two of the haunch of venison put to grill, if there was any left of it, and give it him all on a plate: together with a twelve-pound loaf of farmhouse bread, such as is not to be had outside of Great Britain. This was done in about five minutes (for even Mrs Cook respected Crumpy); and being served up, with a quart of ale, in Crumpy's own head privacy, it had such a good effect that the Captain was ready to face anybody.

Old Crumpy was a most crafty old fellow—which was one reason why I liked him, as a contrast to my frankness—and he managed it all, and kept such a look-out, that no one suspected him of any more than an honoured old chum in his stronghold. Captain Bluett also knew exactly what his bearings were, and from a loftier point of view than would ever occur to Crumpy. A man who had carried a 50-gun ship right under the lower port-holes of a 120-gun enemy, and without any orders to that effect, and only from want of some easier business, he (I think) may be trusted to get on in almost anything.

This was the very thing—I do believe—occurring to the mind of somebody sitting, as nearly as might be now, upon a very beautiful sofa. The loveliest work that you can imagine lay between her fingers; and she was doing her very best to carry it on consistently. But on her lap lay a London paper, full of the highest authority; and there any young eyes might discover a regular pit-pat of tears.

"My dear, my dear," said Lady Bluett, being not so very much better herself, although improved by spectacles; "it is a dreadful, dreadful thing to think of those poor Frenchmen killed, so many at a time, and all in their sins. I do hope they had time to think, ever so little, of their latter end. It makes

me feel quite ill to think of such a dreadful carnage, and to know that my own son was foremost in it. Do you think, my dear, that your delicate throat would be any worse in the morning, if you were to read it once more to me? The people in the papers are so clever; and there was something I did not quite catch about poor Rodney's recklessness. How like his dear father, to be sure! I see him in every word of it."

"Auntie, the first time I read it was best. The second and third time, I cried worse and worse; and the fourth time, you know what you said of me. And I know that I deserved it, Auntie, for having such foolish weak eyes like that. You know what I told you about Captain Rodney, and begged you to let me come here no more. And you know what you said—that it was a child's fancy; and if it were not, it should take its course. The Colonel was wiser. Oh, Auntie, Auntie! why don't you always harken him!"

"For a very good reason, my dear child—he always proves wrong in the end; and I don't. I have the very highest and purest respect for my dear brother's judgment. Every one knows what his mind is, and every one values his judgment. And no stranger, of course, can enter into him, his views, and his

largeness, and intellect; as I do, when I agree with him. There, you have made me quite warm, my dear; I am so compelled to vindicate him."

"I am so sorry—I did not mean—you know what I am, Auntie."

"My dear, I know what you are, and therefore it is that I love you so. Now go and wash your pretty eyes, and read that again to me, and to the Colonel. Many mothers would be proud perhaps. I feel no pride whatever, because my son could not help doing it."

There was something else this excellent lady's son could not help doing. He caught the beautiful maid of Sker in her pure white dress in a nook of the passage, and with tears of pride for him rolling from her dark grey eyes, and he could not help—but all lovers, I trow, know how much to expect of him.

"Thank you, Rodney," Delushy cried; "to a certain extent, I am grateful. But, if you please, no more of it. And you need not suppose that I was crying about, about,—about anything.

"Of course not, you darling. How long have I lived, not to know that girls cry about nothing? nine times out of ten at least. Pearly tears, now prove your substance."

"Rodney, will you let me alone? I am not a

French decker of 500 guns, for you to do just what you like with. And I don't believe any one knows you are here. Yes, yes, yes! Ever so many darlings, if you like—and 'with my whole heart I do love you,' as darling Moxy says. But one thing, this moment, I insist upon—no, not in your ear, nor yet through your hair, you conceited curly creature; but at the distance of a yard I pronounce that you shall come to your mother."

"Oh, what a shame!" And with that unfilial view of the subject, he rendered himself, after all those mortal perils, into the arms of his mother. With her usual quickness Delushy fled, but came back to the drawing-room very sedately, and with a rose-coloured change of dress, in about half an hour afterwards.

"How do you do, Captain Rodney Bluett?"

"Madam, I hope that I see you well."

Lady Bluett was amazed at the coolness of them, and in her heart disappointed; although she was trying to argue it down, and to say to herself, "how wise of them!" She knew how the Colonel loved this young maid, yet never could bear to think of his nephew taking to wife a mere waif of the sea. The lady had faith in herself that she might in the end overcome this prejudice. But of course if the young

ones had ceased to care for it, she could only say that young people were not of the stuff that young people used to be.

While she revolved these things in her tender, warm, and motherly bosom, the gentlemen came from the dining-room, to pay their compliments to the ladies, and to have their tea and all that, according to the recent style of it. They bowed very decently, as they came in, not being topers by any means: and the lady of the house arose and curtsied to them most gracefully. Then Rodney, who had found occasion ere this to salute Colonel Lougher and his visitors, led forward the maid, and presented her to them, with a very excellent naval bow.

"My dear uncle, and friends of the family," he began, while she trembled a little, and looked at him with astonishment; "allow me the favour of presenting to you a lady who will do me the honour of becoming my wife, very shortly I hope."

The Colonel drew back with a frown on his face. Lady Bluett on the other hand ran up.

"What is the meaning of this?" she cried. "And not a word of it to your own mother! Oh, Andalusia, how shocking of you!"

"I think, sir," said the Colonel, looking straight at the youth, "that you might have chosen a better

moment to defy your uncle, than in the presence of his oldest friends. It is not like a gentleman, sir. It cuts me to the heart to say such a thing to the son of my own sister. But, sir, it is not like a gentleman."

The old friends nodded to one another, in approval of this sentiment; and turned to withdraw from a family scene.

"Wait, if you please," cried Rodney Bluett. "Colonel Lougher, I should deserve your reproach, if I had done anything of the kind. My intention is not to defy you, sir; but to please you and gratify you, my dear uncle, as your lifelong kindness to me and to this young lady deserves. And I have chosen to do it before old friends, that your pleasure may be increased by their congratulations. Instead of being ashamed, sir, of the origin of your future niece—or you my dear mother of your daughter, you may well be proud of it. She belongs to one of the oldest families in the West of England. She is the grandchild of Sir Philip Bampfylde of Narnton Court, near Barnstaple. And I think I have heard my mother speak of him as an old friend of my father."

"To be sure, to be sure!" exclaimed Lady Bluett, ere the Colonel could recover himself: "the Bluetts are an old west-country family; but the Bampfyldes

even older. Come to me, my pretty darling. There, don't cry so; or if you must, come in here, and I will help you. Rodney, my dear, you have delighted us, and you have done it most cleverly. But excuse my saying that an officer in the army would have known a little better what ladies are, than to have thrown them into this excitement, even in the presence of valued friends. Come here, my precious. The gentlemen will excuse us for a little while."

"Let me kiss Colonel Lougher first," whispered Delushy; all frightened, crying, and quivering as she was, she could not forget her gratitude. So she bowed her white forehead, and drooped her dark lashes under the old man's benevolent gaze.

"Sit down, my dear friends," said Colonel Lougher, as soon as the ladies had left the room. "My good nephew's tactics have been rather blunt, and of the Aboukir order. However, he may be quite right if this matter requires at once to be spread abroad. At any rate, my dear boy, I owe you an apology. Rodney, I beg your pardon for the very harsh terms I used to you."

With these words he stood up, and bowed to his nephew; who did the same to him in silence, and then they shook hands warmly. After which the young Captain told his story, to which they all

listened intently—five being justices of the shire, and one the lord lieutenant — all accustomed to examine evidence.

"It seems very likely," said Colonel Lougher, as they waited for his opinion. "That David Llewellyn is a most shrewd fellow. But he ought to have said more about the boat. There is one thing, however, to be done at once—to collect confirmative evidence."

"There is another thing to be done at once," cried Rodney Bluett, warmly—"to pull Chowne's nose. And despite his cloth, I will do it roundly."

"My young friend," said the Lord Lieutenant; "prove it first. And then, I think, there are some people who would pardon you."

CHAPTER LXIII.

POLLY AT HOME.

Lest any one should be surprised that Sir Philip Bampfylde could have paid two visits to this delightful neighbourhood, without calling on our leading gentleman, and his own fellow-officer, Colonel Lougher —in which case the questions concerning Delushy would have been sifted long ago—I had better say at once what it was that stopped him. When the General thought it just worth while, though his hopes were faint about it, to inquire into the twisted story of the wreck on our coast, as given by the celebrated Felix Farley; the first authority he applied to was Coroner Bowles, who had held the inquest. Coroner Bowles told him all he knew (half of which was wrong, of course, by means of Hezekiah) and gave him a letter to Anthony Stew, as the most active and penetrating magistrate of the neighbourhood. Nothing could have been more un-

lucky. Not only did Stew baffle my desire to be more candid than the day itself, by his official browbeating, and the antipathy between us—not only did Stew, like an over-sharp fellow, trust one of the biggest rogues unhung—in his unregenerate dissenting days, and before we gave him six dozen, which certainly proved his salvation—(I am sorry to say such things of my present good neighbour, 'Kiah; but here he is now, and subscribes to it) Hezekiah Perkins, whose view of the shipwreck, and learned disquisition on sand, misled the poor Coroner and all of the Jury, except myself, so blindly, that we drowned the five young men, and smothered the baby—not only did Stew, I say, get thus far in bewilderment of the subject, but he utterly ruined all chance of clearing it, by keeping Sir Philip from Candleston Court!

If you ask me how, I can only say, in common fairness to Anthony Stew (who is lately gone, poor fellow, to be cross-examined by somebody sharper even than himself—one to whom I would never afford material for unpleasant questions, by speaking amiss of a man in his power—especially when so needless), in a word, to treat Stew as I hope myself to be treated by survivors, I admit that he may not have wished to keep Sir Philip away from the Colonel.

But the former having once accepted Stew's keen hospitality, and tried to eat fish (which I might have bettered, had I known of his being there) felt, with his usual delicacy, that he ought not to visit a man at feud with the host whose salt—and very little else—he was then enjoying. For Mrs Stew was more bitter of course than even her husband against Colonel Lougher, and roundly abused him the very first evening of Sir Philip's stay with them. So that the worthy General passed the gates of the excellent Colonel, half-a-dozen times perhaps, without once passing through them.

Enough about that; and I need only say, before returning to my own important and perhaps sagacious inquiries in Devonshire, that the news, so hastily blurted out by Captain Rodney Bluett, caused many glad hearts in our parish and neighbourhood; but nevertheless two sad ones. Of these one belonged to Roger Berkrolles, and the other to Moxy Thomas. The child had so won upon both these, not only by her misfortunes and the way in which she bore them, but by her loving disposition, bright manner, and docility, that it seemed very hard to lose her so, even though it were for her own good. Upon this latter point Master Berkrolles, when I came to see him, held an opinion, the folly of which surprised me,

from a man of such reading and history. In real earnest he laid down that it might be a very bad thing for the maid, and make against her happiness, to come of a sudden into high position, importance, and even money. Such sentiments are to be found, I believe, in the weaker parts of the Bible, such as are called the New Testament, which nobody can compare to the works of my ancestor, King David; and which, if you put aside Saint Paul, and Saint Peter (who cut the man's ear off, and rejected quite rightly the table-cloth) exhibit to my mind nobody of a patriotic spirit.

As for Moxy, she would not have been a woman if she had doubted about the value of high position, coin of the realm, and rich raiment. Nevertheless she cried bitterly that this child, as good as her own to her, and given her to make up for them, and now so clever to see to things, and to light the fire, and show her the way Lady Bluett put her dress on, should be taken away in a heap as it were, just as if the great folk had minded her. She blamed our poor Bunny for stealing the heart of young Watkin, who might have had the maid (according to his mother's fancy) with money enough to restock the farm, now things had proved so handsome. As if everybody did not know that Bardie would never think twice of

Watkin; while his mother, hearing of the ships I had taken (as all over the parish reported), had put poor Watkin on bread and water, until he fell in love with Bunny! However, now she cried very severely, and in a great measure she meant it.

Leaving all Newton, and Nottage, and Sker, and even Bridgend to consider these matters, with a pleasing divergence of facts and conclusions, I find it my duty, however repugnant, to speak once more of my humble self. In adversity, my native dignity and the true grandeur of Cambria have always united, against my own feelings, to make me almost self-confident, or at any rate able to maintain my position, and knock under to nobody. But in prosperity, all this drops; extreme affability, and my native longing to give pleasure, mark my deportment towards all the world; and I almost never commit an assault.

In this fine and desirable frame of mind I arrived at Narnton Court once more, sooner perhaps than Captain Bluett, having so much further to go, burst in on his friends at Candleston; although I have given his story precedence, not only on account of his higher rank, but because of the hurry he was in. On the other hand, my part seemed to be of a nice and delicate character—to find out all that I could without making any noise in the neighbourhood, to

risk no chance, if it might be helped, of exciting Sir Philip Bampfylde, and, above all things, no possibility of arousing Chowne, till the proper time. For his craft was so great that he might destroy every link of evidence, if he once knew that we were in chase of him; even as he could out-fox a fox.

When things of importance take their hinge, a good deal, upon feminine evidence, the first thing a wise man always does is to seek female instinct, if he sees his way to guide it. And to have the helm of a woman, nothing is so certain as a sort of a promise of marriage. A man need not go too very far, and must be awake about pen and ink, and witnesses, and so on; but if he knows how to do it, and has lost an arm in battle, but preserved an unusually fine white beard, and has had another wife before, who was known to make too little of him, the fault is his own if he cannot manage half-a-dozen spinsters.

My reputation had outrun me—as it used to do, sometimes too often—for in the despatches my name came after scarcely more than fifty, though it should have been one of the foremost five; however, my wound was handsomely chronicled, and with a touch of my own description, such as is really heartfelt. Of course it was not quite cured yet, and I felt very shy about it; and the very last thing I desired

was for the women to come bothering. Tush! I have no patience with them; they make such a fuss of a trifle.

But being bound upon such an errand, and anxious to conciliate them so far as self-respect allowed, and knowing that if I denied myself to them, the movement would be much greater, I let them have peeps, and perceive at the same time that I really did want a new set of shirts. Half-a-dozen of damsels began at once to take my measure: and the result will last my lifetime.

But, amid all this glorification, whenever I thought of settling, there was one pretty face that I longed to see, and to my mind it beat the whole of them. What was become of my pretty Polly, the lover of my truthful tales, and did she still remember a brave, though not young officer in the Navy, who had saved her from the jaws of death, by catching small-pox from her? These questions were answered just in time, and in the right manner also, by the appearance of Polly herself, outblushing the rose at sight of me, and without a spot on her face, except from the very smart veil she was wearing. For she was no longer a servant now, but free and independent, and therefore entitled to take the veil, and she showed her high spirit by doing this, to the deep indignation of

all our maid-servants. And still more indignant were these young women, when Polly demeaned herself, as they declared, with a perfectly shameless and brazen-faced manner of carrying on towards the noble old tar. They did not allow for the poor thing's gratitude to the only one who came nigh her in her despairing hour and saved her life thereby, nor yet for her sorrow and tender feeling at the dire consequence to him; and it was not in their power, perhaps, to sympathise with the shock she felt at my maimed and war-beaten appearance. However, I carried the whole of it off in a bantering manner, as usual.

Still there was one resolution I came to, after long puzzling in what way to cope with the almost fatal difficulty of having to trust a woman. So I said to myself, that if this must be done, I might make it serve two purposes—first for discovery of what I sought, and then for a test of the value of a female, about whom I had serious feelings. These were in no way affected by some news I picked up from Nanette, or, as she now called herself, "The widow Heaviside." Not that my old friend had left this world, but that he gave a wide berth to the part containing his beloved partner. She, with a Frenchwoman's wit and sagacity, saw the advantage of

remaining in the neighbourhood of her wrongs ; and here with the pity now felt for her, and the help she received from Sir Philip himself, and her own skill in getting up women's fal lals, she maintained her seven children cleverly.

After shedding some natural tears for the admired but fugitive Heaviside, she came round, of course, to her neighbours' affairs ; and though she had not been at Narnton Court at the time when the children were stolen, she helped me no little by telling me where to find one who knew all that was known of it. This was a farmer's wife now at Burrington (as I found out afterwards), a village some few leagues up the Tawe, and her name was Mrs Shapland.

"From her my friend the Captain shall decouver the everything of this horrible affair," said Nanette, who now spoke fine English. "She was the—what you call—the bonne, the guard of the leetle infants. I know not where she leeves, some barbarous name. I do forget—but she have one cousin, a jolly girl, of the leetle name—pray how can you make such thing of 'Mary ?' "

"What, do you mean Polly?" I asked ; "that is what we make of Mary. And what Polly is it then, Madame?"

"Yes, Paullee, the Paullee which have that horrible pest that makes holes in the faces. 'Verole' we call it. The Paullee that was in the great mansion, until she have the money left, the niece of the proud woman of manage. You shall with great facility find that Paullee." Of course I could, for she had told me where I might call upon her, which I did that very same afternoon.

And a pretty and very snug cottage it was, just a furlong, or so, above the fine old village of Braunton, with four or five beautiful meadows around it, and a bright pebbly brook at the turn of the lane. The cottage itself, even now in November, was hung all over with China roses, and honeysuckle in its second bloom, which it often shows in Devonshire. And up at the window, that shook off the thatch, and looked wide-awake as a dog's house, a face, more bright than the roses, came, and went away, and came again, to put a good face upon being caught.

Hereupon I dismissed the boys, who, with several rounds of cheers, had escorted me through Braunton; and with genuine thankfulness I gazed at the quiet and pleasing prospect. So charming now in the fall of the leaf, what would it be in the spring-time, with the meadows all breaking anew into green, and the trees all ready for their leaves again? Also these

bright red Devonshire cows, all belonging to Polly, and even now streaming milkily—a firkin apiece was the least to expect of them, in the merry May month. A very deep feeling of real peace, and the pleasure of small things fell on me; for a man of so many years, and one arm, might almost plead to himself some right to shed his experience over the earth, when his blood had been curdling on so many seas.

The very same thought was in Polly's eyes when she ran down and opened the door for me. The whole of this property was her own; or would be, at least, when her old grandmother would allow herself to be buried. That old woman now was ninety-five, if the parsons had minded the register; and a woman more fully resolved to live on I never had the luck to meet with. And the worst of it was, that her consent to Polly's marriage was needful, under the ancient cow-keeper's will, with all of the meadows so described, that nobody could get out of them. Hereupon, somehow, I managed to see that a very bold stroke was needed. And I took it, and won the old lady over, by downright defiance. I told her that she was a great deal too young to have any right to an opinion; and when she should come to my time of life, she would find me ready to hearken her. She said that no doubt it was bred from the wars for

sailors to talk so bravely; but that I ought to know better—with a fie, and a sigh, and a fie again. To none of this would I give ear, but began to rebuke all the young generations, holding to ridicule those very points upon which they especially plume themselves, until this most excellent woman began to count all her cows on her fingers.

"Her can't have them. No, her shan't have they," she cried, with a power which proved that she saw them dropping into my jaws almost; "her han't a got 'em yet; and why should her have 'em?"

Into this very fine feeling and sense of possession I entered so amiably, that amid much laughter and many blushes on the part of Polly (who pretended to treat the whole thing as a joke), the old lady put on her silver goggles, and set down her name to a memorandum, prepared on the spur of the moment by me. Whereupon I quite made my mind up to go bravely in for it, and recompense Polly for all her faith, and gratitude, and frugality, if she should prove herself capable of keeping counsel also.

To this intent I expressed myself as elegantly as could be, having led Polly out to the wooden bridge, that nobody else might hear me. For that fine old woman became so deaf, all of a sudden, that I had no faith in any more of her organs, and desired to be

at safe distance from her, as well as to learn something more of the cows. Nor did I miss the chance; for all of them having been milked by Polly, came up to know what I had to say to her, and their smell was beautiful. So I gave them a bit of salt out of my pocket, such as I always carry when ashore, and offered them some tobacco; and they put out their broad yellow lips for the one, and snorted and sneezed at the other. When these valuable cows were gone to have a little more grazing, I just made Polly aware of the chance that appeared to be open before us. In short, I laid clearly before her the whole of my recent grand discovery, proving distinctly that with nothing more than a little proper management, I possessed therein at least an equivalent for her snug meadow homestead, and all the milch-cows, and the trout-stream. Only she must not forget one thing, namely, that the whole of this value would vanish, if a single word of this story were breathed any further off than our own two selves, until the time was ripe for it. Of course I had not been quite such a fool as to give Nanette the smallest inkling of any motive on my part beyond that pure curiosity, with which she could so well sympathise. Also it had been settled between Captain Bluett and myself, that a fortnight was to be allowed me for hunting up all the evidence,

before he should cross the Channel; unless I took it on myself to fetch him.

Polly opened her blue eyes to such a size at all I told her, that I became quite uneasy lest she should open her mouth in proportion. For if my discovery once took wind before its entire completion, there would be at least fifty jealous fellows thrusting their oars into my own rowlocks, and robbing me of my own private enterprise. Also Miss Polly gave way to a feeling of anger and indignation, which certainly might be to some extent natural, but was, to say the least of it, in a far greater measure indiscreet, and even perilous.

"Oh the villain! oh the cruel villain!" she exclaimed, in a voice that quite alarmed me, considering how near the footpath was; "and a minister of the Gospel too! Oh the poor little babes, one adrift on the sea, and the other among them naked savages! What a mercy as they didn't eat him! And to blame the whole of it on a nice, harmless, kind-spoken, handsome gentleman, like our Captain! Oh, let me get hold of him!"

"That, my dear Polly, we never shall do, if you raise your voice in this way. Now come away from these trees with the ivy, and let us speak very quietly."

This dear creature did (as nearly as could be expected) what I told her; so that I really need not repent of my noble faith in the female race. This encouraged me; from its tendency to abolish prejudice, and to let the weaker vessels show that there is such a thing as a cork to them. Men are apt to judge too much by experience on this subject; when they ought to know that experience never does apply to women, any more than reason does.

Nevertheless my Polly saw the way in and out of a lot of things, which to me were difficult. Especially as to the manner of handling her cousin, Mrs Shapland, a very good woman in her way, but a ticklish one to deal with. And all the credit for all the truth we got out of Mrs Shapland belongs not to me (any more than herself), but goes down in a lump to poor Polly.

To pass this lightly—as now behoves me—just let me tell what Susan Shapland said, when I worked it out of her. Any man can get the truth out of a woman, if he knows the way; I mean, of course, so far as she has been able to receive it. To expect more than this is unreasonable; and to get that much is wonderful. However, Polly and I, between us, did get a good deal of it.

Of course, we did not let this good woman even

guess what we wanted with her; only we borrowed a farmer's cart from Bang, my old boy, who was now set up in a farm on his grandmother's ashes; and his horse was not to be found fault with, if a man did his duty in lashing him. This I was ready to understand, when pointed out by Polly; and he never hoisted his tail but what I raked him under his counter.

So after a long hill, commanding miles and miles of the course of the river, we fetched up in the courtyard of Farmer Shapland, and found his wife a brisk sharp woman, quite ready to tell her story. But what she did first, and for us, at this moment, was to rouse up the fire with a great dry fagot, crackling and sparkling merrily. For the mist of November was now beginning to crawl up the wavering valley, and the fading light from the west struck coldly on the winding river.

In such a case, and after a drive of many miles and much scenery, any man loves to see pots and pans goaded briskly to bubbling and sputtering, or even to help in the business himself, so far as the cook will put up with it. And then if a foolish good woman allows him (as pride sometimes induces her) to lift up a pot-lid when trembling with flavour, or give a shake to the frying-pan in the ecstasy of crackling,

or even to blow on the iron spoon, and then draw in his breath with a drop of it—what can he want with any scenery out of the window, or outside his waistcoat?

Such was my case, I declare to you, in that hospitable house with these good people of Burrington; nor could we fall to any other business, until this was done with; then after dark we drew round the fire, with a black-jack of grand old ale, and our pipes, to hear Mrs Shapland's story.

CHAPTER LXIV.

SUSAN QUITE ACQUITS HERSELF.

It really does seem as wise a plan as any I am acquainted with, to let this good woman act according to the constitution of her sex,—that is to say, to say her say, and never be contradicted. We contradicted her once or twice, to reconcile her to herself; but all that came of it was to make her contradict perhaps herself, but certainly us, ten times as much. She did her best to explain her meaning; and we really ought to enter more into their disabilities. Therefore let her tell her story, as nearly in her own words, poor thing, as my sense of the English language can in any style agree with.

"I was nurse at Narnton Court, ever so many years ago—when my name was Susan Moggeridge,—Charley, you cannot deny it, you know; and all of us must be content to grow old, it is foolish to look at things otherwise. Twelve and six, that makes eighteen;

now, Captain Wells, you know it do; and, Charley, can you say otherwise? Then it must have been eighteen years agone, when I was took on for under-nurse, because the Princess was expecting, the same as the butler told me. And it came to pass on a Sunday night, with two miles away from the doctor. Orders had been given; but they foreigners always do belie them. Too soon always, or too late; and these two little dears was too soon, by reason of the wonderful child the eldest one was prepared for. A maid she was, and the other a boy; two real beauties both of them; as fair as could be, with little clear dots under their skin, in corner places, because of their mother the Princess. But nothing as any one would observe, except for a beauty to both of them. The boy was the biggest, though the girl came first; and first was her nature in everything, except, of course, in fatness, and by reason of always dancing. Not six months old was that child before she could dance on the kitchen table, with only one hand to hold her up, and a pleasure it was to look at her. And laugh with her little funny face, and nod her head, she would, as if she saw to the bottom of everything. And when she were scarce turned the twelve-month, she could run, like—oh, just like anything, and roll over and over on the grass with her 'Pom-

yolianian dog,' as she called him, and there wasn't a word in the language as ever come amiss to her, but for the r's or the y's in it. Words such as I could lay no tongue to, she would take and pronounce right off, and then laugh at herself and everybody. And the way she used to put her hands out, laying down the law to all of us—we didn't want a showman in the house so long as we had Miss Bertha, or 'Bardie,' as she called herself, though christened after her mother. Everybody, the poor little mite, she expected everybody to know her name and all about her; and nothing put her in such a passion as to pretend not to know who she was. 'I'se Bardie,' she used to cry out, with her little hands spread, and her bright eyes flashing; 'I'se Bardie, I tell 'a; and evelybody knows it.' Oh yes, and she never could say 'th'—but 'niss' and 'nat,' for this and that. And how angry she used to be, to be sure, if anybody mocked her, as we used to do for the fun of it. But even there, she was up to us, for she began to talk French, for revenge upon us, having taken the trick from her mother.

"Likewise the boy was a different child altogether, in many ways. He scarcely could learn to speak at all, because he was a very fine child indeed, and quiet, and fat, and easy. He would lie by for hours on a

velvet cushion, and watch his little sister having her perpetual round of play. Dolls, and horses, and Noah's arks, and all the things that were alive to her, and she talking to them whiles the hour,—he took no more notice than just to stroke them, and say, 'Boo, boo!' or 'Poor, poor!' which was nearly all that he could say. Not that he was to blame, of course, nor would any one having sense think of it, especially after he took the pink fever, and it struck to his head, and they cut his hair off. Beautiful curls as was ever seen, and some of them in my drawer up-stairs now, with the colour of gold streaking over them. Philip his name was, of course, from Sir Philip, and being the heir to the title; but his clever sister she always called him 'little brother,' as if he was just born almost, when he weighed pretty nearly two of her.

"Sir Philip, the good old gentleman, was away in foreign parts, they said, or commanding some of the colonies, up to the time when these two twins were close upon two years old, or so. I remember quite well when he came home with his luggage marked 'General Bampfylde;' and we said it was disrespectful of the Government to call him so, when his true name was 'Sir Philip.' He had never seen his grandchildren till now, and what a fuss he made with

them! But they had scarcely time to know him, before they were sadly murdered; or worse, perhaps, for all that any one knows to the contrary. Because Sir Philip's younger son, Captain Drake Bampfylde, came from the seas and America, just at this time. No one expected him, of course, from among such distant places; and he had not been home for three years at least, and how noble he did look, until we saw how his shirts were cobbled! And every one all about the place said that his little finger was worth the whole of the Squire's body. Because the Squire, his elder brother, and the heir of Sir Philip, was of a nature, not to say—but I cannot make it clear to you. No one could say a word against him; only he were not, what you may call it,—not as we Devonshire people are,—not with a smile and kind look of the eye, the same as Captain Drake was.

"This poor Captain Drake—poor or bad, I scarce know which to put it, after all I have heard of him —anyhow his mind was set upon a little chit of a thing, not more than fifteen at this time. Her name was Isabel Carey, and her father had been a nobleman, and when he departed this life, he ordered her off to Narnton Court. So she did at an early age; and being so beautiful, as some thought, she was desperate with the Captain. They used to go walking

all up in the woods, or down on the river in a boat, until it was too bad of them. The Captain, I dare-say, meant no harm, and perhaps he did none; but still there are sure to be talkative people who want to give their opinions. If Charley had carried on so with me, whatever should I have thought of myself?

"Well, there was everybody saying very fine things to everybody, gay doings likewise, and great feasts, and singing, and dancing, and all the rest. And the Captain hired a pleasure-boat, by name the 'Wild Duck of Appledore;' and I never shall forget the day when he took a whole pack of us for a sail out over Barnstaple bar and back. I was forced to go, because he needs must take the children; and several even old people were sick, but no one a quarter so bad as me. And it came into my mind in that state, that he was longing, as well as welcome, to cast us all into the raging sea. However, the Lord preserved us. This little ship had one mast, as they call it, and he kept her generally in a little bend just above the salmon-weir, so as to see the men draw the pool, and himself to shoot the wild-fowl, from a covered place there is; and by reason of being so long at sea, he could not sleep comfortable at the Court, but must needs make his bed in this pleasuring-ship, and to it

he used to go to and fro in a little white boat as belonged to it.

"All this time the weather was so hot we could scarcely bear our clothes on, and were ready to envy them scandalous savages belonging to the famous Parson Chowne, who went about with no clothes on. There was one of these known to be down on the burrows a-bathing of his wife and family, if a decent woman may name them so. Well, the whole of these gay goings on, to celebrate the return of Sir Philip, and of Captain Drake, and all that they owed to the Lord for His goodness, was to finish up with a great dinner to all the tenants on the property; and then on the children's birthday, a feasting of all the gentry around; and a dance with all sorts of outlandish dresses and masks on, in the evening. For the fashion of this was come down from London, and there had been a party of this sort over to Lord Bassett's; and the neighbourhood was wild with it. And after this everything was to be quiet, because my Lady the Princess Bertha was again beginning to expect almost.

"And now, Captain Wells, you would hardly believe what a blow there was sent, by the will of the Lord, upon all of this riot and revelry. There was many of us having pious disposals, as well as religious

bringings up, whose stomachs really was turned by the worldliness as was around us. Young ladies of the very best families, instead of turning their minds to the Lord, turning of themselves about, with young men laying hold of them, as if there was nothing more to be said than 'Kiss me quick!' and, 'I'll do it again!' But there was a judgment coming. They might lay the blame on me, if they like. There is folk as knows better.

"That very night it was so hot, with the sun coming up from the river, that even the great hall the dance was to be in, was only fit to lie down in. So that Captain Drake, in his man-of-war voice, shouted (and I think I can hear him now), 'Ladies and gentlemen, I propose that we have our dance out on the terrace.' This was the open made-up flat between the house and the river, and the Captain's offer was caught up at, directly the gentlefolk seen the moon.

"Here they were going on ever so long; and the more of twirling round they had, and of making heel and toe, and crossing arms and even frontesses, the more they seemed to like it; also the music up and down almost as bad as they was; so that what with the harlequin dresses, and masquerading, and mummeries, scarcely any one could have the head to be

sure of any one else almost. I could not help looking at them, although my place was to heed the children only, and keep them out of mischief, and take them to bed at the proper time. But Captain Drake, who was here, there, and elsewhere, making himself agreeable, up he comes to me with a bottle, and he says, 'Mary, have some.' 'My name is not Mary, but Susan, sir, and much at your service,' I answered; so that he poured me a great glassful, and said that it was Sam—something. I was not so rude as to give him denial, but made him a curtsy, and drank it, for it was not so strong as my father's cider; no, nor so good to my liking. And for any to say that it got in my head, shows a very spiteful woman. The Captain went on to the other maids, as were looking on for the life of them, all being out-of-doors, you must mind, and longing to have their turn at it. But I held myself above them always, and went back to my children.

"These were in a little bower made up for the occasion, with boughs of trees, and twisted wood, and moss from the forest to lie upon. Master Philip was tired and heavy, and working his eyes with the backs of his hands, and yawning, and falling away almost. But that little Bertha was as wide-awake as a lark on her nest in the morning. Everywhere she

was looking about for somebody to encourage her to have 'more play,' as she always called for; and 'more play' continually. That child was so full of life, it was 'more play' all day long with her! And even now, in the fiery heat and thorough down thirst of the weather, nothing was further from her mind than to go to bed without a gambol for it. She had nothing on but her little shift, or under-frock I should call it, made by myself, when the hot weather came, from a new jemmyset of the Princess, and cut out by my lady to fit her for the sake of the coolness. Her grand white upper frock, trimmed with lace, had been taken off by her papa, I believe, when the visitors would have her dance on the table, and make speeches to them; the poor little soul was so quick and so hot.

"Well, I do declare to you, Captain Wells, and Charley, Polly likewise, which will believe me, though the men may not, it was not more than a minute or so much, perhaps I should say not half a minute, as I happened to turn round to pass a compliment with a young man as seemed struck with me the Sunday before in church-time; a sailor he were, and had come with the Captain, and was his mate of the pleasure-boat. A right down handsome young man he was—no call for you to be jealous, Charley.

Beneath the salt waves he do lie. Well, I turned back my head in about five seconds, and both of the babes was gone out of my sight! At first I were not frightened much. I took it for one of Miss Bertha's tricks, to make off with her little brother. So strong she was on her legs, though light, that many a time she would lift him up by his middle and carry him half round the room, and then both of them break out laughing. 'I'll whip you, you see if I don't,' I cried, as I ran round the corner to seek for them; though whip them I never did, poor dears, any more than their own mother did. I ran all about, for five minutes at least, around and among the branches stuck in to make the bower, and every moment I made up my mind for Miss Bardie to pop out on me. But pop out she never did, nor will, until the day of judgment.

"When I began to see something more than an innocent baby trick in it, and to think (I daresay) of these two babies' value, with all the land they were born to, the first thing I did was to call out 'Jack!' such being all sailors' names, of course. But Jack was gone out of all hearing; and most folk said it was Jack that took them! To the contrary I could swear; but who would listen to me when the lie went out that I was quite tipsy?

"Of the rest I cannot speak clearly, because my

heart flew right up into my brain, directly moment the people came round shouting at me for the children. And of these the very worst was Parson Chowne. If it had been his own only children—such as he says he is too good to have—he scarcely could have been more rampagious, not to use worse words of him. The first thing that every one ran to, of course, was the parapetch and the river, and a great cry was made for Captain Drake Bampfylde, from his knowledge of the waterways. But, though all the evening foremost in conducting everything, now there was no sign to be had of him, or of who had seen him last. And it must have been an hour ere ever he come, and then of course it was too late.

"I was so beside myself all that night that I cannot tell how the time went by. I remember looking over the parapetch at a place where the water is always deep, and seeing the fishermen from the salmon-weir dragging their nets for the poor mites of bodies. And my blood seemed to curdle inside me almost, every time they came out with a stone or a log. Nothing was found from that night to this day, and nothing will ever be found of it. I was discharged, and a great many others; not the first time in this world, I believe, when the bottom of the whole was witchcraft. Here, Charley, put something hot in my glass; the evenings

are getting so dark; and I never can see the moon and the water, like that, and the trees, without remembering. Now ask me no more, if you please, good people."

When Mrs Shapland had finished this tale, and was taking some well-earned refreshment, Polly and I looked at one another, as much as to say, "That settles it." Nor did we press her with any more questions until her mind had recovered its tone by frying some slices of ham cut thin, and half-a-dozen new-laid eggs for us. Then, I approached her with no small praise, which she deserved, and appeared (so far as I could judge) to desire, perhaps; and with a little skill on my part, she was soon warmed up again, having tasted egg-flip, to be sure of it.

"Yes, Captain Wells, you can see through the whole of it. Sailors can understand a river, when nobody else knows anything. The Captain came forward as soon as he could, and he says, 'You fools, what are you about? An hour ago the tide was running five knots an hour where you be dragging! If the poor children fell over, they must be down river-bar by this time.' And off he set out on a galloping horse, to scurry the sand-hills somehow. And scurry was now the whole of it. Sir Philip came forth, and that poor Squire Philip;

and a thousand pounds was as freely talked of as if it was halfpence. And every one was to be put in prison; especially me, if you please, as blameless as the unborn babe was! And that very night the Princess were taken, and died the next day, upsetting everything, ever so much worse than ever. For poor Squire Philip fell into a trance, so to say, out of sheer vexation. He cried out that the hand of the Lord was upon him, and too heavy for him to bear—particular from his own brother. And after that not an inch would he budge to make inquiry or anything, but shut himself up in his dead wife's rooms, and there he have moped from that day to this, in a living grave, as you may call it."

In reply to my question what reasons the Squire, or any one else, might have for charging the Captain with so vile a deed, this excellent woman set them forth pretty much to the following purport. First, it was the Captain himself who proposed the dancing on the terrace. Second, it was his own man who drew her attention away from the children, after a goblet of wine had been administered by the master. Third, it was his own boat which was missing, and never heard of afterwards. Fourth, the Captain himself disappeared from the party at the very time that the children were stolen, and refused to say

whither, or why, he was gone. That active and shrewd man Parson Chowne no sooner heard of the loss than he raised a cry for the Captain all over the terrace, to come and command the fishermen; and though as a friend of the family Chowne would never express an opinion, he could not undo that sad shake of the head which he gave when no Captain could be found. Fifth, a man with a Captain's hat was seen burying two small bodies that night, in the depth of Braunton Wilderness; though nothing was heard of it till the next week, through the savageness of the witness; and by that time the fierce storm on the Sunday had changed the whole face of the burrows, so that to find the spot was impossible. Sixth, it was now recalled to mind that Drake Bampfylde had killed a poor schoolfellow in his young days, for which the Lord had most righteously sent a shark in pursuit of him. It was likely enough that he would go on killing children upon occasion. Seventh reason, and perhaps worth all the rest—only think what a motive he had for it. No one else could gain sixpence by it; Drake Bampfylde would gain everything—the succession to the title and estates, and the immediate right to aspire to the hand of the beautiful heiress, Miss Carey, who was known to favour him.

Thus the common people reasoned; but our Susan attached no weight to any except the last argument. As for one, she knew quite well that the young seaman sauntered there quite by chance, and quite by chance she spoke to him: and as for wine, she could take a quart of her father's cider, and feel it less than she could describe to any one; and as for a rummer of that stuff she had, it was quite below contempt to her. And concerning the Captain just being away, and declining to say where he was, like a gentleman; none but ignorant folk could pretend not to know what that meant. Of course he was gone, between the dances, for a little cool walk in the firwoods, together with his Isabel; and to expose her name to the public, with their nasty way of regarding things, was utterly out of the question to a real British officer! And to finish it, Mrs Shapland said that she was almost what you might call a young woman even now; at any rate with ten times the sense any of the young ones were up to. And ten years of her life she would give, if Charley would allow of her, to know what became of them two little dears, and to punish the villain that wronged them.

Hereupon my warmth of heart got the better of my prudence. My wise and pure intention was to get out of this good woman all I could; but impart to her

nothing more than was needful, just to keep her talking. Experience shows us that this need be very little indeed, if anything, in a female dialogue. But now I was brought to such a pitch of tenderness by this time, with my heart in a rapid pulse of descriptions, and the egg-flip going round sturdily, also Polly looking at me in a most beseeching way, that I could not keep my own counsel even, but was compelled to increase their comfort by declaring everything.

CHAPTER LXV.

SO DOES POOR OLD DAVY.

Hereupon, you may well suppose that the grass must no longer grow under my feet. With one man, and positively two women, in this very same county, having possession of my secret, how long could I hope to work this latter to any good purpose? Luckily Burrington lay at a very great distance from Nympton on the Moors, and with no road from one to the other; so that if Mr and Mrs Shapland should fail of keeping their promised tightness, at least two Barnstaple market-days must pass before Nympton heard anything. And but for this consideration, even their style of treatment would not have made me so confiding.

On the following morn, while looking forth at pigs, and calves, and cocks, and ducks, I perceived that the crash must come speedily, and resolved to be downright smart with it. So after making a brisk

little breakfast, upon the two wings and two legs of a goose, grilled with a trifle of stuffing, there was but one question I asked before leaving many warm tears behind me.

"Good Mistress Shapland, would you know that jemmyset of the child, if you saw it?"

"Captain Wells, I am not quite a natural. My own stitching done with a club-head, all of it, and of a three-lined thread as my uncle's, and nobody else had, to Barnstaple. Likewise the mark of the Princess done, a mannygram, as they call it."

The weather was dull, and the time of year as stormy as any I know of: nevertheless it was quite fine now, and taking upon myself to risk five guineas out of my savings, Ilfracombe was the place I sought, and found it with some difficulty. Thus might Barnstaple bar be avoided, and all the tumbling of inshore waters; and thus with no more than a pilot-yawl did I cross that dangerous channel, at the most dangerous time of the year almost. Nothing less than my Royal clothes and manifest high rank in the Navy could have induced this fine old pilot to make sail for the opposite coast in the month of November, when violent gales are so common with us. But I showed him two alternatives, three golden guineas on the one hand, impressment on the other;

for a press-gang was in the neighbourhood now, and I told him that I was its captain, and that we laughed at all certificates. And not being sure that this man and his son might not combine to throw me overboard, steal my money, and run back to port, I took care to let them perceive my entry of their names and my own as well in the register of the coast-guard. However they proved very honest fellows, and we anchored under Porthcawl point soon after dark that evening.

Having proved to the pilot that he was quite safe here, unless it should come on to blow from south-east, of which there was no symptom, and leaving him under the care of Sandy, who at my expense stood treat to him, I made off for Candleston, not even stopping for a chat with Roger Berkrolles. The Colonel, of course, as well as his sister Lady Bluett, and Rodney, were delighted with what I had to tell them, while the maid herself listened with her face concealed to the tale of her own misfortune. Once or twice she whispered to herself, "Oh my poor poor father!" and when I had ended she rose from the sofa where Lady Bluett's arm was around her, and went to the Colonel and said, "How soon will you take me to my father?"

"My darling Bertha," said the Colonel, embracing

her, as if she had been his daughter, "we will start to-morrow, if Llewellyn thinks the weather quite settled, and the boat quite safe. He knows so much about boats, you see. It would take us a week to go round by land. But we won't start at all, if you cry, my dear!"

I did not altogether like the tone of the Colonel's allusion to me; still less was I pleased when he interrupted Lady Bluett's congratulations, thanks, and fervent praises of my skill, perseverance, and trustiness in discovering all this villany.

"Humph!" said the Colonel; "I am not quite sure that this villany would have succeeded so long, unless a certain small boat had proved so adapted for fishing purposes."

"Why, Henry!" cried his sister; "how very unlike you! What an unworthy insinuation! After all Mr Llewellyn has done; it is positively ungrateful. And he spoke of that boat in this very room, as I can perfectly well remember, not—oh not—I am sure any more than a very few years ago, my dear."

"Exactly," said the Colonel; "too few years ago. If he had spoken of that at the time, as distinctly as he did afterwards, when the heat of inquiry was over, and when Sir Philip himself had abandoned it, I do not see how all this confusion, between the loss

of a foreign ship and the casting away of a British boat, could have arisen, or at any rate could have failed to be cleared away. Llewellyn, you know that I do not judge hastily. Sir, I condemn your conduct."

"Oh, Colonel, how dreadful of you! Mr Llewellyn, go and look at the weather, while I prove to the Colonel his great mistake. You did speak of the boat at the very inquest, in the most noble and positive manner; and nobody would believe you, as you your very self told me. What more could any man do? We are none of us safe, if we do our very best, and have it turned against us."

My conscience all this time was beating, so that I could hear it. This is a gift very good men have, and I have made a point of never failing to cultivate it. In this trying moment, with even a man so kind and blameless suddenly possessed, no doubt, by an evil spirit against me, stanch as rock my conscience stood, and to my support it rose, creditably for both of us.

"Colonel Lougher," my answer was, "you will regret this attack on the honour of a British officer. One, moreover, whose great-grandfather harped in your Honour's family. Captain Bluett understands the build of a boat as well as I do. He shall look at

that boat to-morrow morning, and if he declares her to be English-built, you may set me down, with all my stripes and medals, for a rogue, sir. But if he confirms my surety of her being a foreigner, nothing but difference of rank will excuse you, Colonel Lougher, from being responsible to me."

My spirit was up, as you may see; and the honour of the British Navy forced me to speak strongly: although my affection for the man was such that sooner than offend him, I would have my other arm shot away.

"Llewellyn," said the Colonel, with his fine old smile spreading very pleasantly upon his noble countenance; "you are of the peppery order which your old Welsh blood produces. Think no more of my words for the present. And if my nephew agrees with you in pronouncing the boat a foreigner, I will give you full satisfaction by asking your pardon, Llewellyn. It was enough to mislead any man."

Not to dwell upon this mistake committed by so good a man, but which got abroad somehow—though my old friend Crumpy, I am sure, could never have been listening at the door—be it enough in this hurry to say, that on the next morning I was enabled to certify the weather. A smartish breeze from the north-north-west, with the sea rather dancing than

running, took poor Bardie to her native coast, from which the hot tide had borne her. Before we set sail, I had been to Sker in Colonel Lougher's two-wheeled gig, and obtained from good Moxy the child's jemmy-set from the old oak chest it was stored in.

And now I did a thing which must for ever acquit me of all blame so wrongfully cast upon me. That is to say, I fetched out the old boat, which Sandy Macraw had got covered up; and releasing him in the most generous manner from years and years of backrent, what did I do but hitch her on to the stern of the pilot-yawl, for to tow? Not only this, but I managed that Rodney should sail on board as her skipper, and for his crew should have somebody who had crossed the channel before in that same poor and worthless boat, sixteen years agone, I do declare! And they did carry on a bit, now and then, when our sprit-sail hid them from our view. For the day was bright, and the sea was smooth.

The Colonel and I were on board of the yawl, enjoying perfect harmony. For Captain Rodney of course had confirmed my opinion as to the build of the boat, and his uncle desired to beg my pardon, which the largeness of my nature quite refused to hear of. If a man admits that he has wronged me, satisfied I am at once, and do not even point out

always, that I never could have done the like to him.

Colonel Lougher had often been at sea, in the time of his active service, and he seemed to enjoy this trip across channel, and knew all the names of the sails and spars. But falling in as we did with no less than three or four small craft on our voyage, he asked me how Delushy's boat could possibly have been adrift for a whole night and day on the channel, without any ship even sighting her. I told him that this was as simple as could be, during that state of the weather. A burning haze, or steam from the land, lay all that time on the water; and the lower part thereof was white, while the upper spread was yellow. Also the sea itself was white from the long-continued calmness, so that a white boat scarcely would show at half a mile of distance. And even if it did, what sailors were likely to keep a smart look-out in such roasting weather? Men talk of the heat ashore sometimes; but I know that for downright smiting, blinding, and overwhelming sun-power, there is nothing ashore to compare with a ship.

Also I told the Colonel, now that his faith in me was re-established, gliding over the water thus, I was enabled to make plain to him things which if he had been ashore might have lain perhaps a little beyond

his understanding. I showed him the set of the tides by tossing corks from his bottles overboard, and begging him to take a glass of my perspective to watch them. And he took such interest in this, and evinced so much sagacity, that in order to carry on my reasoning with any perspicacity, cork after cork I was forced to draw, to establish my veracity.

Because he would argue it out that a boat, unmanned and even unmasted, never could have crossed the channel as Bardie's boat must needs have done. I answered that I might have thought so also, and had done so for years and years, till there came the fact to the contrary; of which I was pretty well satisfied now; and when the boat was produced and sworn to, who would not be satisfied? Also I begged to remind him how strongly the tide ran in our channel, and that even in common weather the ebb of the spring out of Barnstaple river might safely be put at four knots an hour, till Hartland point was doubled. Here, about two in the morning, the flood would catch the little wanderer, and run her up channel some ten or twelve miles, with the night-wind on the starboard-beam driving her also northward. When this was exhausted, the ebb would take her into Swansea Bay almost, being so light a boat as she was, with a southern breeze prevailing. And then

the next flood might well bring her to Sker,—exactly the thing that had come to pass. Moreover I thought, as I told the Colonel (although of course with diffidence), from long acquaintance with tropical waters and the power of the sun upon them, I thought it by no means unlikely that the intense heat of the weather, then for more than six weeks prevailing, might have had some strong effect on the set and the speed of the currents.

However, no more of arguments. What good can they do, when the thing is there, and no reasoning can alter it? Even Parson Chowne might argue, and no doubt would with himself (although too proud with other people), that all he did was right, and himself as good a man as need be.

We ran across channel in some six hours, having a nice breeze abaft the beam, and about the middle of the afternoon we landed at Ilfracombe cleverly. This is a little place lying in a hole, and with great rocks all around it, fair enough to look at, but more easy to fall down than to get up them. And even the Barnstaple road is so steep that the first hill takes nearly two hours of climbing. Therefore, in spite of all eager spirits, we found ourselves forced to stay there that night, for no one would horse us onwards, so late at this November season.

Perhaps, however, it was worth while to lose a few hours for the sake of seeing Delushy's joy in her native land. This, like a newly-opened spring, arose, and could not contain itself. As soon as her foot touched the shore, I began to look forward to a bout of it. For I understand young women now, very well, though the middle-aged are beyond me. These latter I hope to be up to, if ever I live to the age of fourscore years, as my constitution promises. And if the Lord should be pleased to promote me to the ripe and honest century (as was done to my great-grandfather), then I shall understand old women also, though perhaps without teeth to express it.

However this was a pretty thing, and it touched me very softly. None but those who have roamed as I have understand the heart-ache. For my native land I had it, ever and continually, and in the roar of battle I was borne up by discharging it. And so I could enter into our poor Bardie, going about with the tears in her eyes. For she would not allow me to rest at the inn, as I was fain to do in the society of some ancient fishermen, and to leave the gentlefolk to their own manner of getting through the evening.

"Come out," she cried, "old Davy; you are the only one that knows the way about this lovely place."

Of course I had no choice but to obey Sir Philip's

own grand-daughter, although I could not help grumbling; and thus we began to explore a lane as crooked as a cork-screw, and with ferns like palm-trees feathering. In among them little trickling rills of water tinkled, or were hushed sometimes by moss, and it looked as if no frost could enter through the leafy screen above.

"What a country to be born in! What a country to belong to!" exclaimed the maid continually, sipping from each crystal runnel, and stroking the ferns with reverence. "Uncle Henry, don't you think now that it is enough to make one happy to belong to such a land?"

"Well, my dear," said her Uncle Henry, as she had been ordered to call the Colonel, "I think it would still more conduce to happiness for some of the land to belong to you. Ah, Llewellyn, I see, is of my opinion."

So I was, and still more so next day, when, having surmounted that terrible hill, we travelled down rich dairy valleys on our road to Barnstaple. Here we halted for refreshment, and to let Delushy rest and beautify herself, although we could see no need of that. And now she began to get so frightened that I was quite vexed with her: her first duty was to do me credit; and how could she manage it, if her eyes

were red? The Colonel also began to provoke me, for when I wanted to give the maid a stiff glass of grog to steady her, he had no more sense than to countermand it, and order a glass of cold water!

As soon as we came to Narnton Court, we found a very smart coach in the yard, that quite put to shame our hired chaise, although the good Colonel had taken four horses, so as to land us in moderate style. Of course it was proper that I, who alone could claim Sir Philip's acquaintance, as well as the merit of the whole affair, should have the pleasure of introducing his new grandchild to him; so that I begged all the rest to withdraw, and the only names that we sent in, were Captain Llewellyn and "Miss Delushy." Therefore we were wrong, no doubt, in feeling first a little grievance, then a large-minded impatience, and finally a strong desire—ay, and not the desire alone—to swear, before we got out of it. I speak of myself and Captain Bluett, two good honest sailors, accustomed to declare their meaning since the war enabled them. But Colonel Lougher (who might be said, from his want of active service, to belong to a past generation), as well as Delushy, who was scarcely come into any generation yet,—these two really set an example, good, though hard, to follow.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE MAID AT LAST IS "DENTIFIED."

However, as too often happens, we blamed a good man without cause. A good man rarely deserves much blame; whereas a bad man cannot have too much—whether he has earned it or otherwise—to restrain him from deserving more. The reason why Sir Philip Bampfylde kept us so long waiting, proved to be a sound and valid one; namely, that he was engaged in earnest and important converse with his daughter-in-law, Lady Bampfylde, now wife (if you will please to remember) to Commodore Sir Drake Bampfylde, although by birth entitled the Honourable Isabel Carey, the one that had been so good to me when I was a ferryman; of superior order, certainly; but still, no more than a ferryman!

Since my rise in the world began, I have found out one satisfactory thing—that a man gets on by merit.

How long did I despair of this, and smoke pipes, and think over it; seeing many of my friends advancing, by what I call roguery! And but for the war (which proves the hearts and reins of men, as my ancestor says), I might still have been high and dry, being too honest for the fish-trade. However, true merit will tell in the end, if a man contrives to live long enough.

So when the beautiful lady came out through the room where I sate waiting, as I touched my venerable forelock to her (as humbly as if for a sixpenny piece), a brave man's honest pride wrought weakness in my eyes, as I gazed at her. I loved her husband; and I loved her; and I thought of the bitter luck between them, which had kept them separate. Partly, of course, the glory of England, and duty of a proud man's birth; partly also bad luck of course, and a style of giving in to it; but ten times more than these, the tricks that lower our fellow-creatures.

This noble and stately lady did not at first sight recognise me; but when I had told her in very few words who I was, and what I had done, and how long I had sailed with her husband, and how highly he respected me, her eyes brightened into the old sweet smile, although they bore traces of weeping.

"My name is not 'Lady Carey,'" she said, for I was calling her thus on purpose, not knowing how

she was taking wedlock, and being of opinion that an "honourable miss" ought always to be called a lady. "My name is 'Lady Bampfylde;' and I like it, if you please: although I remember, Mr Llewellyn, what your views are of matrimony. You used to declare them only too plainly, whenever we crossed your ferry, for the purpose, as I used to think, of driving poor Nanette to despair of you."

"And a lucky thing for me, your ladyship, to have acted so consistently. But his Honour the Commodore, of course, holds the opposite opinion."

"It is hard to guess the opinions of a commodore always on service. Sir Drake, as I daresay you have heard, can scarcely bear to come home now."

I saw that she was vexed by something, and also vexed with herself, perhaps, for having even hinted it. For she turned her beautiful face away, and without a word would have left me. But with my usual quickness of step, I ran into the lobby-place, and back in a moment with our Delushy, clinging like a woodbine to a post. At such moments, I never speak, until women begin with questions. It saves so much time to let them begin; because they are sure to insist on it. Meanwhile Delushy was making the prettiest curtsy that presence of mind permitted.

"You lovely dear, why, who are you?" cried Lady Bampfylde, with a start, that made me dread hysterics.

"I do not know, Madam," answered Delushy, with the whole of her mind so well in hand, by reason of years of suffering; "but many people believe me to be the Bertha Bampfylde that was lost, nearly twenty years agone."

"What! The baby! The baby—at least one of the babies—that my husband—David Llewellyn, this is very cruel of you."

And that was all the thanks I got! While, what could I have done otherwise? In five minutes more, she would have been off in her grand coach with six horses, after offending Sir Philip so much, that he could not have borne to look after her; although, of course, he was now coming out like a gentleman to a visitor. Seeing such a pay-night coming, and a large confusion, I begged Colonel Lougher and Captain Bluett to keep for a little while out of it. And nothing could more truly prove how thoroughly these were gentlemen, than that they withdrew to a niche of the under-butler's pantry, wherein they could hear no word of it.

It was now my place to stand forward bravely, and to put things clearly; without any further loss of reason, and even without considering how these

delicate ladies might contrive to take my meaning nicely. To spare good ladies from any emotion, is one of the main things of my life; although they show such a want of gratitude, when I have done my utmost.

But as for frightening Sir Philip, of course, I had no scruple about that; because of his confidence in the Lord. Therefore, abandoning Lady Bampfylde to the care of her maid, who was running up from the servants' hall to look after her, I fixed my hook (screwed on for the purpose) firmly into Delushy's sleeve, that she might not faint, or run away, or do anything else unreasonable, and I led her up the long hall to meet Sir Philip, as he came down the steps at the upper end thereof.

The old General looked rather haggard and feeble, as if the power of his life were lowered by perpetual patience. But something had happened to vex him, no doubt, in his interview with Lady Bampfylde, so that he walked with more than his usual stateliness and dignity. He had never beheld me as a one-armed man, nor yet in my present uniform, for I took particular care to avoid him during the day or two spent at his house before I went to Burrington, so for a moment he did not know me, but gazed with surprise at the lovely figure which I was sustaining so clumsily.

"Sir Philip Bampfylde, allow me," I said, stretch-

ing forth my right hand to him, "to repay you for some of the countless benefits you have heaped upon me, by presenting you with your long-lost granddaughter—and your grandson to come afterwards."

"It cannot be; it cannot be," was all he could say, although for so many years he had shown his faith that it must be. His fine old countenance turned as white as the silver hair that crowned it, and then as red as it could have been in the hopeful blush of boyhood. And the pure and perfect delicacy of high birth quickened with sorrow prevented him from examining Delushy, as he longed to do.

"Speak up, child, speak up," said I, giving her a haul with my hook, as when first I landed her; "can't you tell your dear Grandfather how glad you are to see him?"

"That I will with all my heart," the maiden answered bashfully, yet lifting her eyes to the old man's face with pride as well as reverence; "as soon as I perceive that you, sir, wish to hear me say it."

"You will not think me rude—I am scarcely strong enough for this—it has come on me so suddenly. And it must be quite as bad for you. Lead the young lady to a chair, Llewellyn. Or, stay; I beg your pardon. It will perhaps be better to call our kind and worthy housekeeper."

Sir Philip perceived a thing which had escaped me, though brought to my notice beforehand by our good Colonel Lougher; that is to say, how hard it would be upon the feelings of this young girl, to have her "identity" (as Crowner Bowles entitled it) discussed in her own presence. Therefore she was led away by that regular busybody the housekeeper, Mrs Cockhanterbury; while I begged leave to introduce Colonel Lougher and Captain Bluett to Sir Philip Bampfylde. And then when all had made their bows and all due salutations, I was called upon to show my documents and explain the evidence so carefully gathered by me.

It is as much above my power, as beyond my purpose, to tell how that ancient and noble gentleman, after so much worry from the long neglect of Providence, took (as if he had never deserved it) this goodness of the Lord to him. Of course, in my class of life, we cannot be always dwelling on children; whose nature is provoking always, and in nothing more so than that they will come when not wanted; yet are not forthcoming with the folk who can afford them. Nevertheless, I think that if the Lord had allowed any thief of a fellow (much more one of His own ministers) to steal two grandchildren of mine, and make a savage of one baby, and of the other a

castaway, the whole of my piety would have been very hard pushed to produce any gratitude. Sir Philip, however, did appear most truly desirous to thank God for this great mercy vouchsafed to him; even before he had thoroughly gone through the ins and outs of the evidence. For he begged us to excuse him, while he should go to see to our comfort; and two fine bottles of wine (white and red) appeared, and began to disappear, under my hatches mainly, before our noble host came back to set us a good example. And when he came he had quite forgotten to dust the knees of some fine kerseymere, and the shins of black silk stockings.

Deep sense of religion is quite in its place when a man has had one arm shot off, still more so if both arms are gone, and after a leg, indispensable. Nevertheless it must not be intruded upon any one; no, not even by the chaplain, till the doctor shakes his head. Knowing also that Colonel Lougher had a tendency towards it (enough to stop the decanters if he should get upon that subject with the arguments it sticks fast in), I was delighted to see Delushy slipping into the room as if she had known the place for a century. The General clearly had managed to visit her during the time of his absence from us; what passed between them matters not, except that

he must have acknowledged her. For now she went up to him and kissed him; rather timidly, perhaps, but still she touched his forehead. Then he arose and stood very upright, as if he had never begun to stoop, and passing his arm round her delicate waist, both her hands he took in his. And as they faced us, we were struck with the likeness between blooming youth and worn but yet majestic age.

"Gentlemen," he said, "or rather I should call you kind good friends, you have brought me not only a grandchild, but the very one I would have chosen if the whole world gave me choice. By-and-by you shall see her stand by the picture of my dear and long-lamented wife. That, I think, will convince you that we want no further evidence. For me, these thumb-nails are enough. Bertha, show your thumb-nails."

She laughed her usual merry laugh (although she had been crying so) while she spread her dainty hands, exactly as she used to spread them, when she was only two years old, with me alone to look at her.

"Here it is, sir," cried the General, overlooking me, in the rush of his sentiments towards the Colonel: "here is the true Bampfylde mark. Even the Bassets have it not, nor the Traceys, nor the St Albyns. Will you oblige me by observing that these two thumb-

nails have a most undoubted right and left to them? Bertha, do try to keep still for a moment."

"Well, I declare," said the Colonel, calmly taking out his eye-glass; "yes, I declare you are right, my good sir. Here is a most evident right and left—Andalusia, do stand still—not only in the half-moons at the base, but in the vein, and what I may call the radiants of the pinkness. I cannot express my meaning, but—my darling, come and kiss me."

This Delushy did at once, as for years she used to do; and not being certain even now whether she ought to forsake the Colonel for a General, though proved to be a very fine and newly-turned up Grandfather. None of us had thought of her, and the many shifts of female wind, coming to pass perhaps inside her little brain and heart so. Wherefore this poor David, who desires always to be the last, but by force of nature is compelled for ever to take the lead—I it was who got her off to bed, that we might talk of her.

CHAPTER LXVII.

DOG EATS DOG.

To a man, whose time of life begins to be a subject of some consideration to him, when the few years still in hope can be counted on a hand, and may not need a finger; and with the tide of this world ebbing to the inevitable sea—to him there is scarcely any sweet and gentle pastime more delightful than to sit on a bank of ancient moss, beside a tidal river, and watch the decreasing waters, and prove his own eternity by casting a pebble into them.

Hence it was that Sir Philip Bampfylde, on the very morning after I gave him back his grandchild, sate gazing into the ebb of the Tawe, some fifty yards below the spot, whence Jack Wildman's father carried off so wickedly that helpless pair of children. Here it was my privilege to come up to Sir Philip, and spread before him my humble reasons for having preferred the kitchen last night to the dining-room

and the drawing-room. It was consistent with my nature; and he, though wishing otherwise, agreed not to be offended.

Then I asked him how the young lady (whose health every one of us had honoured, all over the kitchen-table) had contrived to pass the night, and whether she had seen her father yet. He said she had slept pretty well considering, but that as concerned her father, they had not thought it wise to let her see him, until the doctor came. There was no telling how it might act upon Squire Philip's constitution, after so many years of misery, cobwebs, and desolation. For Providence had not gifted him with a mind so strong as his father's was, and the sudden break in on the death of the mind has been known, in such a case, to lead to bodily decease. But few things vexed the General more than that wretched lie of Chowne's, and slander upon a loyal family while in service of the Crown. What Captain Drake had landed from the boat was not an arm-chest, but a chest of plate and linen, belonging to his brother, which he would no longer borrow, while the Squire so cruelly dealt with him.

Then I asked Sir Philip whether the ancient builder over at Appledore had been sent for to depose to the boat; for we had brought that little craft on the top

of our coach from Ilfracombe. The General said that I might see him even now examining her, if I would only take the trouble to look round the corner; but he himself was so well convinced, without any further testimony, that he did not even care to hear what the old man had to say of it, any more than he cared for the jemmyset. This, however, is not my manner of regarding questions. Not from any private fountains of conviction, and so on, but out of the mouths of many witnesses shall a thing be established. Therefore I hastened round the corner, to sift this ancient boatwright.

As surly a fellow as ever lived, and from his repugnance to my uniform, one who had made more money, I doubt, by the smuggler's keg than the shipwright's adze. Entering into his nature at sight, I took the upperhand of him, as my rank insisted on.

"Hark ye now, master ship-carpenter, where was this little craft put together, according to your opinion?"

Either this fellow was deaf as a post, or else he meant to insult me, for he took no more notice of me than he did of the pigs that were snuffling at beechnuts down by the side of the landing-place. I am not the right man to put up with insolence; therefore I screwed my hammer-head into the socket

below my muscles, and therewith dealt him a tap on his hat, just to show what might come afterwards.

Receiving this administration, and seeing that more was very likely from the same source to be available, what did this rogue do but endeavour to show the best side of his manners. Wherefore, to let him have his say, here is his opinion.

"This here boat be the same as I built, year as my wife were took with quinzy, and were called home by the Lord. I built her for Wild-duck of Appledore, a little dandy-rigged craft as used to be hired by Cap'en Bampfylde. To this here boat I can swear, although some big rogue have been at work, painting her, as knew not how to paint; and a lubber, no doubt, every now and then patching her up, or repairing of her. The name in her stern have been painted up from 'Wild-duck, Appledore,' into 'Santa Lucia, Salvador;' three or four letters are my own, the rest are the work of some pirate. She be no more foreign-build than I be. But a sailor accustomed to foreign parts would be sure to reckon so, reason why I served my time with a builder over to Port-au-Prince. And I should like to see the man anywhere round these here parts, as can tuck in the bends as I does."

Leaving this conceited fellow to his narrow un-

pleasantness, I turned my head, and there beheld Captain Bluett harkening.

"Come," he cried out, in his hearty manner, "what a cook's boiling of fools we are! Here we are chewing a long-chewed quid, while the devil that brewed this gale of wind may fly far away, and grin at us. Llewellyn, do you mean to allow——"

"Hush," I said softly, for that low shipwright showed his eyes coming up under his cap. And I saw that he was that particular villain, after his scurrilous words about me, who would sell his soul to that wretch of a Chowne for half-a-crown a-week almost. Therefore I led our young Captain Bluett well away out of this fellow's hearing.

"Davy," said he, "we all know your courage, your readiness, and your resources. Still you appear to be under a spell—and you know you are superstitious about this cunning and cowardly blackguard, who frightens the whole of this country, as he never could frighten Glamorganshire."

"I have no fear of him, sir," I said; "I will go with you to confront him."

"Why, your teeth are ready to chatter, Llewellyn; and your lips are blue! You who stood like a milestone, they tell me, at the helm of the Goliath, or like a clock going steadily tick, before we fired a

shot, and with both shell and shot through your grey whiskers——"

"But, Captain, a minister of the Lord——"

"Master, a minister of the devil—once for all, to-day I go to horse-whip him, if he is young enough; or to pull his nose if he is old enough, and Old Harry be with him in choice of the two? Zounds, sir, is it a thing to laugh at?"

Rodney Bluett was well known to every one who served under him for the mildness of his language, and the want of oaths he had; and so, of course, for his self-control, and the power of his heart when it did break forth. Everybody loved him because he never cursed any one at a venture, and kept himself very close to facts, however hard driven by circumstances; so that I was now amazed to hear this young man spoil my pipe with violent emotions.

"Have you consulted Sir Philip?" I asked. "It is his place to take up the question."

"What question? There is no question. The thing is proved. My duty is plain. Sir Philip is too old to see to it. The Squire is a spooney. The Commodore is not here yet. I have spoken to his wife, who is a very sweet and wise lady; and she agrees with me that it will save the family a world of scandal; and perhaps failure of the law, for me to take

the law into my own hands, and thrash this blackguard within an inch of his life."

"To be sure, and save her husband from the risk of tackling a desperate man. It is most wise on her part. But I beg you, my dear sir, for the sake of your dear uncle and your good mother, keep clear of this quarrel. You know not the man you have to deal with. Even if you can thrash him, which is no easy business, he will shoot you afterwards. He is the deadest shot in the county."

"Hurrah!" cried Rodney, tossing up his hat; "that entirely settles it. Come along, old fellow, and show us the way: and not a word to any one."

Now this may seem a very mad resolve for a man of my sense to give into. But whether I turned myself this way or that, I could see no chance of bettering it. If I refused to go, young Rodney (as I could see by the set of his mouth) would go alone, and perhaps get killed, and then how could any of the family ever look at me again? On the other hand, if I should go to the Colonel, or to the General, for opinion, and to beg them to stop it, my interference —nine chances to one—would only end in giving offence among the superior orders. Add to this my real desire to square it out with Chowne himself, after all his persecution, and you may be able to for-

give me for getting upon horseback, after many years of forbearance, and with my sugar-nippers screwed on, to lay hold by the forestay, if she should make bad weather. Also, I felt it my duty to take a double-barrelled pistol, heavily loaded and well primed.

Captain Rodney forged ahead so on a real hunting-craft, that my dappled grey, being warranted not to lurch me overboard, could not keep in line whatever sail I made upon her. My chief rule in life is not to hurry. What good ever comes of it? People only abuse you, and your breath is too short to answer them. Moreover, I felt an uneasy creaking in my bends from dousing forward, and then easing backward, as a man must do who knows how to ride. The Captain was wroth with me, out of all reason; but as he could not find the way to Nympton Moors without me, I was enabled to take my leisure, having the surety of overgetting him when the next cross-road came. Therefore it was late afternoon when we turned into the black fir-grove which led up to the house of Chowne, and Rodney Bluett clutched the big whip in his hand severely. For we had asked at the little inn of which I spoke a long time ago, whether the Parson was now at home.

"Ay, that 'un be," said the man with a grin, for

we did not see the landlady; "but ye best way not to go nigh 'un."

Already I seemed not to feel as I hoped, in the earlier stage of the journey. My thoughts had been very upright for a while, and spirited, and delighted; but now I began to look at things from a different point of view almost. It is not man's business to worry his head about righting of wrongs in this world, unless they are done to himself; and if so, revenge is its name, and an ugly one. Long life leads one to forgive, when to carry it on would be troublesome.

Through the drip of dying leaves, the chill of dull November now began to darken over us as we turned the corner of Chowne's own road, and faced his lonely mansion. The house had a heavy and sullen look, according to my ideas, not receiving light and pleasure of the sun when possible. Heavy fir-trees overhung it, never parting with their weight; and the sunset (when there was any) could not pierce the holm-oaks.

"What a gloomy and devilish place!" cried Rodney Bluett, beginning to tremble from some unknown influence. "Upon my soul, if I lived here, I should be hatching plots myself. Or is it the nature of the man that has made the place so horrible?"

"Let us go back," said I; "come back, my good sir, I conjure you. Such a man should be left to God, to punish in His own good time."

"Hark!" cried Rodney, pulling up, and listening through the gloomy wood; "that was a woman's scream, I am sure. Is he murdering some more little ones?"

We listened, and heard a loud piercing shriek, that made our hair stand on end almost, so mad was it, and so unearthly; and then two more of yet wilder agony; and after that a long low wailing.

"On, on!" cried Rodney Bluett; "you know these paths, gallop on, Davy."

"You go first," I answered; "your horse is fresher; I am coming—to be sure I am—do you think I am frightened?"

"Well, I don't know," he replied; "but I am not ashamed to own that I am."

Clapping spurs to his horse, he dashed on; and thoroughly miserable as I felt, there was nothing for me but to follow him.

In the name of the Lord, what a sight we came on, where the drive sweeps round at the corner of the house! Under a dark tree of some sort, and on a garden bench, we discovered the figures of two women. Or rather, one sate on the bench; the

other lay stretched on the ground, with her head cast recklessly back on the ledge, her hair spread in masses over it, and both hands pressed on her eyes and ears, to shut out sight and hearing. Her lips were open, and through her white teeth came wails of anguish, that would have been shrieks, if nature had not failed her.

But the elder woman sate upright, in scorn of all such weakness, with her gaunt figure drawn like a cable taut, no sign of a tear on her shrunken cheeks, and the whole of her face as numb and cold as an iced figurehead in the Arctic seas. Yet no one, with knowledge of the human race, could doubt which of these two suffered most.

We reined up our horses, and gazed in terror, for neither of them noticed us; and then we heard, from inside the house, sounds that made our flesh creep. Barking, howling, snapping of teeth, baying as of a human bloodhound, frothy splutterings of fury, and then smothered yelling.

"Her have a gat 'un now," cried a clown, running round the end of the house, as if he were enjoying it. "Reckon our passon wun't baite much moore, after Passon Jack be atop of 'un."

"Oh sir, oh sir, oh for God's sake, sir," cried the poor lady who had lain on the ground, rushing up to

us, and kneeling, and trying to get hold of us; "you must have come to stop it, sir. Only one hour—allow him one hour, dear, dear sirs, for repentance. He has not been a good man, I know, but I am his own wife, good kind sirs—and if he could only have a little time, if it were only half an hour—he might, he might——"

Here a sound of throttling came through a broken window-pane, and down she fell insensible.

"What does it mean?" cried Rodney Bluett; "is it murder, madness, or suicide? Follow me, Davy. Here I go, anyhow, into the thick of it."

He dashed through the window; and I with more caution, cocking my pistol, followed him, while I heard the clown shouting after us—

"Danged vules both of 'e. Bide outside, bide outside, I tell 'e."

Oh that we had remained outside! I have been through a great deal of horrible sights, enough to harden any man, and cure him of womanly squeamishness. Yet never did I behold, or dream of, anything so awful as the scene that lay before me. People were longing to look at it now, but none (save ourselves) durst enter.

It was Chowne's own dining-room, all in the dark, except where a lamp had been brought in by a

trembling footman, who ran away, knowing that he brought this light for his master to be strangled by. And in the corner now lay his master, smothered under a feather-bed; yet with his vicious head fetched out in the last rabid struggle to bite. There was the black hair, black face, and black tongue, shown by the frothy wainscot, or between it and the ticking. On the feather-bed lay exhausted, and with his mighty frame convulsed, so that a child might master him, Parson Jack Rambone, the strongest man, whose strength (like all other powers) had laid a horrible duty upon him. Sobbing with all his great heart he lay, yet afraid to take his weight off, and sweating at every pore with labour, peril of his life, and agony.

"Oh Dick, Dick," he said, quite softly, and between his pantings; "how many larks have we had together, and for me to have to do this to you! I am sure you knew me, before you died. I think you know me now, Dick. Oh, for God's sake, shut your eyes! Darling Dick, are you dead, are you dead? You are the very cleverest fellow ever I came across of. You can do it, if you like. Oh, dear Dick, Dick, my boy, do shut your eyes!"

We stood looking at them, with no power to go up to them; all experience failed us as to what was the

proper thing to do, till I saw that Chowne's face ought to have a napkin over it. None had been laid for dinner; but I knew where butlers keep them.

When I had done this, Parson Jack (who could not escape from the great black eyes) arose, and said, "I thank you, sir." He staggered so that we had to support him; but not a word could we say to him. "I am bitten in two places, if not more," he rather gasped than said to us, as he laid bare his enormous arms. "I care not much. I will follow my friend. Or if the Lord should please to spare me, henceforth I am an altered man. And yet, for the sake of my family, will you heat the kitchen poker?"

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE OLD PITCHER AT THE WELL AGAIN.

It helps a thoughtless man on his road towards a better kingdom, to get a glimpse, every now and then, of such visitations of the Lord. When I was a little boy, nothing did me so much good in almost all the Bible, as to hear my father read the way in which Herod was eaten of worms. And now in mature years, I received quite a serious turn by the death of this Parson Chowne of ignominious canine madness. And still more, when I came to know by what condign parental justice this visitation smote him.

For while the women were busy up-stairs by candle-light, and with some weeping, it fell to Parson Rambone's lot to lay the truth before us. This great man took at once to Captain Rodney Bluett, as if he had known him for years; nor did he fail to remember me, and in his distress to seek some comfort from my simple wisdom. So having

packed all the country boobies, constables, doctors, and so on, out of the house, we barred the door, made a bright fire in the kitchen, and sat down in front of it, while a nice cook began to toss up some sweetbreads, and eggs and ham-collops, and so on, for our really now highly necessary sustenance.

You may remember the time I met with a very nice fellow (then Chowne's head-groom), who gave me a capital supper of tripe elegantly stewed by a young cook-maid, himself lamenting the stress (laid upon him by circumstances) not to make his wife of her. He told me then with a sigh of affection between his knife and fork, that social duties compelled him instead to marry a publican's daughter, with fifty pounds down on the nail, he believed, if it was a penny. Nevertheless he felt confident that all would be ordered aright in the end. Now Providence had not allowed such a case of faith to pass unrewarded. He married the publican's daughter, got her money, and paid the last sad duties to her, out of the pocket of his father-in-law, in a Christian-minded manner. And then back he came to Nympton Rectory, and wedded that same cook-maid, who now was turning our ham so cleverly with the egg-slice. Thus we could speak before them both, without the least constraint; and indeed he helped us much by his know-

ledge of the affairs of the family. Also two Justices of the Peace, who had signed the warrant for poor Chowne's end, upon the report of the doctors, but could find no one of strength and courage to carry it out, except Parson Jack; these sate with us to get their supper, before the long cold ride over the moors. And there sate Parson Jack himself, with his thick hands trembling, hopeless of eating a morsel, but dreading to be left alone for a moment.

"What a difference it will make in all this neighbourhood, to be sure!" So said one of their worships.

"Ay, that it will," answered his brother magistrate. "Since Tom Faggus died, there has not been such a man to be found, nowhere round these here parts."

"No, nor Tom Faggus himself," said the other: "a noble highwayman he were; but for mind, not fit to hold a candle to our lamented friend now lying up there in the counterpane."

Parson Jack shuddered, and shook his great limbs, and feigned to have done so on purpose; and then in defiance collected himself, and laid his iron hand on the table, watching every great muscle, to see how long he could keep it from trembling. Then I arose and grasped his hand—for nobody else understood

him at all—and he let me take it with reluctance, wonder, and then deep gratitude. He had been saying to himself—as I knew, though his lips never moved; and his face was set, in scorn of all our moralising—within himself he had been thinking, "I am Jack Ketch; I am worse; I am Cain. I have murdered my own dear brother."

And I, who had seen him brand his bitten arm with the red-hot poker, laying the glowing iron on, until the blood hissed out at it, I alone could gage the strength of heart that now enabled him to answer my grasp with his poor scorched arm, and to show his great tears, and check them.

Enough of this, I cannot stand these melancholy subjects. A man of irreproachable life, with a tendency towards gaiety, never must allow his feelings to play ducks and drakes with him. If the justice of the Almighty fell upon Chowne—as I said it would—let Chowne die, and let us hope that his soul was not past praying for. It is not my place to be wretched, because the biggest villain I ever knew showed his wit by dying of a disease which gave him power to snap at the very devil, when in the fulness of time he should come thirsting to lay hold of him. And but for my purpose of proving how purely justice does come home to us, well con-

tented would I be to say no more about him. Why had he been such a villain through life? Because he was an impostor. Why did he die of rabid madness, under the clutch of his own best friend? Because he lashed his favourite hound to fly at the throat of his own grandfather.

Not only does it confirm one's faith in the honesty of breeding, but it enables me to acquit all the Chownes of Devonshire—and a fine and wholesome race they are—of ever having produced such a scamp, in true course of legitimacy; also enables me not to point out, so much as to leave all my readers to think of, the humble yet undeniable traces of old Davy's sagacity.

What had I said to Mrs Steelyard, when she overbore me so, upon an empty stomach? "Madam," I said, "your son, you mean!" And it proved to be one of my famous hits, at a range beyond that of other men. When great stirs happen, truth comes out; as an earthquake starts the weasels.

Everybody knows what fine old age those wandering gypsies come to. The two most killing cares we have, are money, and reputation. Here behold gypsy wisdom! The disregard of the latter of the two does away with the plague of the former. They take what they want; while we clumsy fellows toil for the cash

as the only way to get the good estimation. Hence it was that Chowne's grandfather came about stealing as lively as ever, at the age of ninety. A wiry and leathery man he was, and had once been a famous conjurer. And now in his old age he came to sleep in his grandson's barn, and to live on his grandson's ducks, potatoes, and pigeons. This was last harvest-time, just as Chowne was enjoying his bit of cub-hunting.

Turning in from his sport one day, in a very sulky humour, with the hounds he was educating, the Parson caught his grandfather withdrawing in a quiet manner from a snug little hen-roost. Not knowing who it was (for his mother had never explained a thing to him, not even that she was his mother) he thought it below his dignity to ride after this old fellow. But at his heels stalked a tall young hound, who had vexed him all day by surliness, and was now whipped in for punishment.

"At him—'loo boy!" he called out; "Hike forrard, catch him by the leg, boy!" But the hound only showed his teeth and snarled; so that Chowne let out his long lash at him. In a moment the dog sprang at his master who was riding a low cob-horse, and bit him in the thigh and the horse in the shoulder, and then skulked off to his kennel.

The hound was shot, and the horse shared his fate in less than six weeks afterwards; and as for the Parson, we know too well what they were forced to do with him.

In her first horror, that stony woman, even Mrs Steelyard, when her son came ravening at her, could not keep her secret. "It is the judgment of God," she cried; "after all there is a God. He set the dogs at his grandfather, and now he would bite his own mother!"

How she had managed to place him in the stead of the real Chowne heir, I never heard, or at least no clear account of it; for she was not (as we know already) one who would answer questions. Let him rest, whoever he was. His end was bad enough even for him.

Enough of this fright—for it was a fright even to me, I assure you—let us come back to the innocent people injured so long by his villany.

To begin with Parson Jack. Never in all his life had he taken a stroke towards his own salvation, until by that horrible job he earned repentance, fear, and conscience. And not only this (for none of these would have stood him in any service, with Chowne still at his elbow), but that the face,—which had drawn him for years, like a loadstone of hell, to destruc-

tion,—now ever present in its terror, till his prayers got rid of it, shone in the dark like the face of a scarecrow, if ever he durst think of wickedness. His wife found the benefit of this change, and so did his growing family, and so did the people who flocked to his church, in the pleasure of being afraid of him. In the roads, he might bite; but in his surplice, he was bound to behave himself, or at least, he must bite the churchwarden first. Yet no one would have him to sprinkle a child, until a whole year was over. And then he restored himself, under a hint from a man beyond him in intellect; he made everybody allow that the poker had entirely cured him, by preaching from the bottom of his chest, with a glass of water upon the cushion, a sermon that stirred every heart, with the text, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?"

I quit him with sorrow; because I found him a man of true feeling, and good tobacco. We got on together so warmly that expense alone divided us. He would have had me for parish-clerk, if I could have seen my way to it.

What prevails with a man like me, foremost first of everything? Why, love of the blessed native land —which every good Welshman will love me for. I

may have done a thing, now and then, below our native dignity, except to those who can enter into all the things we look at. It is not our nature altogether, to go for less than our value. We know that we are of the oldest blood to be found in this ancient island, and we ask nothing more than to be treated as the superior race should be.

In the presence of such great ideas, who cares what becomes of me? I really feel that my marriage to Polly, and prolongation of a fine old breed, scarcely ought to be spoken of. A man who has described the battle of the Nile need not dwell on matrimony.

Hurried speech does not become me on any other subject. Everybody has the right to know, and everybody does know, how the whole of North Devon was filled with joy, talk, and disputation, as to Commodore Bampfylde and the brightness of his acquittal. They drew him from Barnstaple in a chaise, with only two springs broken, men having taken the horses out, and done their best at collar-work. He would have gladly jumped out and kicked them, but for the feeling of their goodwill.

Nothing would have detracted from this, and the feasts that were felt to be due upon it, if Squire Philip had only known how not to die at a time when nobody was seasonably called on to think of

death. But when he learned the shame inflicted by himself on his ancient race, through trusting Chowne, and misbelieving his brother out of the self-same womb; and, above all, when he learned that Chowne was the bastard of a gypsy, he cast himself into his brother's arms, fetched one long sigh, and departed to a better world, with his hat on.

This was the best thing that he could do, if he had chosen the time aright; and it saved a world of trouble. Sir Philip felt it a good bit, of course; and so did Sir Drake Bampfylde. Nevertheless, if a living man withdraws into a shell so calmly, what can he expect more lively than his undertakers?

This was good, and left room for Harry, or rather young Philip Bampfylde, to step into the proper shoes, and have practice how to walk in them. Yet he was so caught with love of service, and of the navy, and so mad about Nelson, that the General could not help himself; but let him go to sea again.

Nelson is afloat just now. The Crappos and the Dons appear to have made up their minds against us; and the former have the insolence to threaten a great invasion. If I only had two arms, I would leave my Polly to howl about me. As it is, they have turned me into a herring! Colonel Lougher has raised a regiment, and I am first drill-sergeant!

Our dear Maid of Sker would also give her beautiful son, only six months old, Bampfylde Lougher Bluett, to go to the wars, and to fight the French; if any one could only show her the way to do without him. He cocks up his toes, in a manner which proves that his feet are meant for ratlines.

How the war is raging! I run to and fro, upon hearing of Felix Farley's Journal, and am only fit to talk of it. Sir Philip comes down, with his best tobacco, whenever he stops at Candleston. And a craft has been built for me on purpose, by the old fellow at Appledore, and her name it is the "Maid of Sker"—to dance across the Channel, whenever a one-armed man can navigate. Colonel Lougher, and even Lady Bluett, have such trust in me, that they cross if their dear Delushy seems to pine too much for her husband. And the Maid herself has brought her son, as proud as if he came out of a wreck, to exhibit him to Moxy, and Roger, and Bunny, and Stradling the clerk—in a word, to all the parish, and the extra-parochial district.

Now I hope that nobody will ask me any more questions concerning any one, male or female. If I cannot speak well of a person—my rule is to be silent.

Hezekiah found his knavery altogether useless.

He scraped himself home at last; and built a bellows-organ at Bridgend, with a 74-gun crash to it. His reputation is therefore up—especially since he rejoined the church—in all churches that can afford him. Yet he will not always own that I was his salvation. Hepzibah prophesies nothing, except that Polly's little son, "David Llewellyn," will do something wonderful, to keep the ancient name up.

It may be so. And I think that he will. But his father never did it. How many chances have I missed! How many times might I have advanced to stern respectability! Yet some folk will like me better, and I like myself no less, for not having feigned to be more than I am—a poor frail fellow.

The children still come down to the well, with three of our Bunny's foremost; they get between my knees, and open blue or brown eyes up at me. In spite of Roger Berkrolles nodding to instil more manners, some of the prettiest stroke my white beard, coaxing for a story. Then they push forward little Davy, thinking that I spoil him so, because of his decided genius giving such promise of bard-hood—already it would do you good to hear him on the Jew's harp. Nevertheless I answer firmly, nine times out of ten at least—

"Little dears," is all I say, "Captain Davy is

getting old. It is hard to tell a tale, but easy to find fault with it. You tell me that my left arm will grow quite as long as my right one, if I only will shake it about, and keep a hollow sleeve on. My pets, when I get another arm, I will tell you another story."

THE END.

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